The HOUNDS OF BANBA

by

DANIEL CORKERY

SINN FEIN SKETCHES

THE HOUNDS OF BANBA. By Daniel Corkery. B. W. Heubsch.

THE old idea (at least, it is several years old) that the Irish literary movement has come to a halt, that it is even less than marking time and suffering a retrogression, that no new figures of importance to compare with the pioneers of the renascence have arisen, is hardly borne out upon consideration. It is true that the poetic drama written in Ireland today may not compare with that of the opening years of William Butler Yeats, Edward Martyn and their comrades, but in the novel form it may confidently be asserted that Ireland is still (and likely to remain so) a potent force. One has but to think of James Joyce, Lennox Robinson, Brinsley MacNamara and Daniel Corkery. Corkery is, if we except MacNamara, the most promising of the younger men, and he is dramatist, poet and prose writer in turn. His first book to be published on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, "The Hounds of Banba," is a collection of nine sketches (or short stories, as one chooses to call them) that will well repay reading, and for several reasons.

It is a book that has been written by a man of inflamed patriotic passions, and as such it should grip the reader mightily. Corkery is a careful and distinguished handler of prose, and each one of the nine sketches in this book are impregnated with a subtle poetic atmosphere that lifts them from the merely clever. They are all sketches of Sinn Fein activities, of men venturing all for their country, and they are indubitably written by a man whose whole sympathies go out to these men, hunted by day and night, who fought so savagely and secretly for a free Ireland during the guerrilla warfare that followed Easter Week in Dublin, 1916, and which was at its fiercest during those bloody and terrible months before the Irish Free State pact was signed in London.

Two types in these sketches will stand out in the mind of the reader, and he does not necessarily have to be an Irish sympathizer to feel the utmost admiration for them. There is the type of the old Fenian, the man who has fought and conspired in the past for a free Ireland and gone down to defeat with his ideals unimpaired and the dream still bright before his eyes. Such a man is old Muirish in the sketch called "The Ember." To this old fighter comes the writer of the sketch fleeing from the English after Easter Week, and it is from the hands of this old lion that the writer receives the little bag of money which had been saved for fifty years. It is Fenian gold, money that had been collected years before. Old Muirish says:

> 'Tis queer * * * but 'tis often I found myself speaking to that little bag of gold the same as if it would be a Christian man. "Ye're useless," I'd say to it, "I may as well throw ye into the river. If I hand ye over to the Y[illegible]

June 1922



THE HOUNDS OF BANBA

Crown 8vo, *cloth, 4/- net*

The Hounds of Banba



R. CORKERY who is the acknowledged master of the short story in Ireland, has fully maintained the high reputation gained by the publication of "A Munster Twilight." ¶ The stories are of the present day, dealing with the adventures of men "on the run."

"The Hounds of Banba" is full of the eternal youth of the world. Here it is the youth that goes out to fight for liberty, and, hunted like a hare upon the mountains, still fights and still hopes. Mr. Corkery, it is needless to say, tells his stories with an extraordinary artistic skill and technical as well as emotional beauty. He can bring tears to your eyes with grief, your heart into your mouth with fear. With his fugitive rebels you scramble and race over black hill-sides, dodging police, knocking up sleeping cottagers for a night's shelter. And then the sick jar of the climax—"I was caught. . . . That night I slept in a lonely cell in Cork jail." Mr. Corkery has an extraordinary power of sweeping

THE TALBOT PRESS LIMITED DUBLIN
T. FISHER UNWIN LIMITED LONDON

the strings of our emotions with the turn of a phrase. He has also an uncanny skill in conveying atmosphere—the atmosphere of tense, strung nerves and reckless, self-conscious daredevilry in which the Irish revolutionaries have been living for years. . . . Mr. Corkery relies not on his construction of plots, but on his presentment of emotional and psychological atmosphere. It is rather with group psychology than individual psychology that he mostly deals, but his handling of individuals is as vivid and as moving. "*The Hounds of Banba*" *is essentially, like Mr. Corkery's other books, the work of a poet. He has caught in it all the poetry and the passion of revolt.*—MISS ROSE MACAULAY in *Time and Tide.*

I have read this book twice, and still find myself searching for words to convey an impression of it. One reason for this impotence is that a passage cannot anywhere be detached to give the clue to it. The whole is greater (for what that is worth) than any part. It is an unity lacking something I know not what; a twilight peopled by forms; the twilight and its ghostly beings with a certain substance but not complete. The characters are by no means sharply defined; they merge into atmosphere. With Falstaff now, or Mr. Micawber, or Touchstone, or a hundred other creations it would be possible

THE TALBOT PRESS LIMITED DUBLIN
T. FISHER UNWIN LIMITED LONDON

to recall to mind, we know where we are. These are complete; they live. But it is as if the characters of the stories or studies under review are scarcely yet born. ¶ Perhaps it is a true picture of Ireland in the making that Mr. Corkery has painted. He is an artist, at any rate. Nowhere is there a suggestion of propaganda. The result is that in one respect at least the book is more valuable than any Unionist newspaper leader or *Freeman's Journal* cartoon. It is *the* book to be studied if we wish to understand Ireland and the Irish question. Whatever the rights and wrongs of that question, this is Ireland. ¶ No doubt but that Mr. Corkery is an artist and "The Hounds of Banba" a book of mark. In its own subtle way it appeals for understanding, and for this reason alone is a book to be bought and read and pondered.—*Bookman's Journal.*

The story called "On the Heights" is a fine piece of work . . . it is but an incident, but it is told with force. "A Bye-product" too . . . is sinister in its simplicity. The last story . . . more definitely strikes the note of pure beauty. The character of Nan Twohig is beautiful. ¶ a picture of Ireland a picture charged with passion and pride.—*Times Literary Supplement.*

. . . . it is impossible to blind oneself to the

THE TALBOT PRESS LIMITED DUBLIN
T. FISHER UNWIN LIMITED LONDON

THE HOUNDS OF BANBA

BY

DANIEL CORKERY



NEW YORK B. W. HUEBSCH, INC. MCMXXII

All rights reserved

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

TO THE
YOUNG MEN OF IRELAND

You strike in here, chant your wild songs, and go:
The chroniclers, with rush lights, stumble after:
And ah! to see them blot the sunrise glow
Of your bright deeds and dreams, your tears and laughter.

2067526

CONTENTS

The Ember, 11
On the Heights, 37
Cowards, 55
Seumas, 71
The Aherns, 105
Colonel Mac Gillicuddy Goes Home, 125
An Unfinished Symphony, 153
A Bye-product, 169
The Price, 197

THE EMBER

THE EMBER

I

NOT very long before the opening of the war I was sent to organise the Volunteers in the north-west corner of County Cork. I made my way to a hamlet called Monera, a windy spot on the lower slope of a mountain—a handful of white-washed walls, sharp-edged, staring, against a background that was rough and dark with heather and rock, hillside and hamlet unrelieved by a single bush or tree. It is a place where everything is hard and black and challenging. For my purpose, it was dead and cold, yet at the same time, strangely enough, still quite proud of the fight it had made for the land in the early 'eighties. Only in few districts in those wild days were such wild deeds done; they tell of them still, but they do not boast of them, the stories are too terrible for that. If you are strange to the ways of the people you will blurt out, "But which of the brothers shot him?" and you will be answered quietly, almost without surprise, "Well, now, isn't it a queer thing, the only man could tell you that, he's in America with twenty years."

It was strange to find such a place apathetic. Doubtless it had carried the rough and overbearing methods of Fenianism into the Land League struggle, and later had carried the methods of the Land League, hardly less terrible, into the politics of a tamer day, only to find them at last discountenanced; whereupon it probably ceased to trouble itself any more with such affairs. The old fight, the Gael against the Sassenach, that was what those windy hillsides were set for. The fragments of Irish verse that even still fall unexpectedly from the lips of the old men, the crafty proverbs they fling at one another when bargaining at a fair, half jocose, wholly earnest, their vague and seemingly fool-simple answers if they cannot fathom the reason of your curiosity —that immemorial fight it was that gave birth to this hard wisdom, this ceaseless alertness, these fierce songs.

I gathered the young men into a lamplit schoolroom, and spoke to them of the Volunteer idea: we must preserve the liberties of Ireland. The fine phrase fell on them as though they were figures of lichened stone, their clothing of stiff, undyed homespun suggesting the image. I soon made an end, weakly and despairingly.

I had a young lad with me, I was breaking him in, he was presently to be sent off organising elsewhere. Well, he then took the matter in hand,

and he put the violence of the 'prentice boy into his oratory: he spoke of the impending attack of the Orangemen of the North on us all as soon as ever Home Rule was granted. We must arm against that attack, we must preserve our newly-granted liberty from assault, even with our lives! From his fine voice, the fine attitude he threw—head raised, shoulders stiffened, pillared legs—one would have expected a burst of wild applause—a surging forward as if our rough-built platform must be rushed. No such thing! Only a dull staring and a silence; in which presently a great old figure rose up—I can still see the keen old face, the eagle eye, deep set, the sharp bones—rose up deliberately, faced us a single moment, and then, almost carelessly, threw his right shoulder at us, making for the open door, uttering a vast sigh, "Home Rule!—Oh wisha! Wisha! Wisha!"

A ripple of laughter went through the men; they were too shy or too unused to such proceedings to make any freer with us. My 'prentice boy was put out. The old eagle's contempt had left him unable to put any thought at all into intelligible words; and I was not anything better. The crowded men below us—the lamps over their heads struck light only on a nose or chin—were shyly turning their heads to one another, and had begun to whisper. I stood up,

and at the same moment, in a far corner, a wild-looking figure crouched up against me, fumbling at the air with a great hand, thick and hard from the plough. I saw him making an effort to speak, the light on his working chin. "Young man," he gasped, "that's not the talk old Muirish wants at all—aw!—you're mistaken, you're mistaken entirely."

The gesture of his open hand downed us for simpletons.

"What is it Muirish wants?" I cried, angrily. I had roused a lion.

"What is it?" he roared at me. "You know very well what it is."

His eyes stared, as if they had no power to shift away.

They were now all on their feet, catching his hands, cheering him—and drawing away from us until a gap lay between us. One of them then stepped into that lamp-lit space. "Go on!" "'Tis all right!" "Go on, Jack!" a hundred phrases were whispered behind him. He was a splendid bit of manhood; my eyes measured him.

"You mean well," he said; "we're not saying otherwise; but Muirish—that man that's gone out—we're all one in these parts—there's no difference—we're all one—we're all one. . . ."

His speech had become incoherent. We were to understand that Muirish had spoken for all.

Suddenly there was movement among them, one of them made for the door, just as Muirish had done, and as if rejoiced that someone had discovered what was just the right thing to do, they all at once rose up and crowded eagerly after him into the open air, leaving us there in the empty room with a ripple of laughter in our ears.

I looked at my 'prentice boy—he was so white and rough with passion that I thought it well to keep silent. After some intentional delay on my part, we lit our lamps and cycled away into the dark, that ripple of laughter still in our ears; and I thought how much better it were for an evangelist in Eirinn to leave a place under a hail of turf sods than in such a manner, how he would have more chance of being listened to if ever he returned.

The only comfort I could pluck from the occurrence was the thought that I had at last found the key to somewhat similar occurrences in other places in Munster. In certain baronies we would get a royal welcome, in the very next barony to these we might be treated as in Monera. "Why," I now said, with my eyes eating up the stony way, "there's a Muirish in every one of them!" And then, my mind running on, I saw that every extreme movement in Ireland leaves behind it a remnant of its broken army—an old workman in a factory in a city, a cobbler in a little

shop in a village, or, like Muirish, a shepherd in a hut on a mountain-side—great old hearts that preserve to the next generation, even to the second next, the spark of fire that they themselves had received in the self-same manner from those that long since were gone home into the silence. Old embers that seem extinct and grey, Oisins dreaming of the heroic dead they have so long outlived, ineffectual in a thousand cases, except to raise jeers and laughter, but in others, where natural powers of will and mind aid them, not ineffectual in hardening the thoughts of a hillside or the thoughts of a little group of men in a corner of a big town, making of them a rocky soil for newer ideas.

II

Before I was sent again to Monera the world was far into the great war, and volunteering had become a dangerous propaganda. The "old fight" was again on. England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity, and England had plainly never been in such difficulty. To those of us who had learned to read the Irish poets, their well-knit, stone-hard, wolf-fierce songs were ever in our ears; they haunted us, those songs, and indeed the men themselves, they looked at us from

the dark with wild eyes; we remembered what they had suffered, we knew what had wrung those songs from them.

"Life conquereth still; as dust the whirlwinds blow—
Alexander, Caesar, and all their power and due!
Tara is grass, and Troy itself lieth low—
It may be that Death will reach the English too."

Such lines haunted me. I awoke at night with them flowing from my lips. They were on my tongue as, for the second time, I rode of a night-fall into that death-still, white-walled hamlet—the bearer of a fiery cross.

At the first cry of real war Monera had leaped to arms; witnessing it, Muirish doubtless had thrown a score of years from his back. As fine a company of Volunteers as I had ever drilled awaited me there. Their Captain's name was Felix MacSwiney. Felix is a name common among the MacSwineys. He praised the courage of his men, yet, I could see, he stood afraid of them: he could not hold them in. He had tried to quench that spirit in them by dint of what he called Barrack Square drilling, and now they were growing restive under it. Could I bring variety into their soldiering?

We—he and I—determined on some skirmishing among the rocky hills. We planned a sham attack; that night we would carry it out. He

would have his men assembled in a secret place in the hills, I would be guided to it.

It was a moonlight night in August, full of tenderness and breadth and distance; and this, and the nature of the country—the huge rocks, fallen on their faces, spreading a cloak of shadow, the heathery slopes unresponsive to the moonlight, unlit by it, the leaping streams, flashing and carolling, tireless in both—I will never forget it all—the night, the land, and then the men, the creatures of this land! Young colts were not so touchy, so eager, so highly-strung, so intelligent with spirit: their large eyes flashed at me in fiery earnestness. They would bark their shins against the juts of rock, rush unthinkingly through streams and boggy hollows, and leap across chasms that frightened me. We surrounded, or rather half surrounded our objective, and most skilfully took it—a difficult massif that culminated in a huge leaning turret of rock, called the Priest's Tower. Then we rested—where? Between it and the gaping chasm below, on a narrow slope of grass cropped and recropped by those mountainy sheep that our skirmishing had sent, with timid cries, scampering into the dark nooks. Above us, blanched in the moonlight, leaned the towering mass, not unlike an epic priest, indeed; below us, just a mass of shadow, with here and there a flank of

rock, bright with moonlight; and far under the shadow a leaping stream whose voice was so constantly in the ear that one forgot it—except in the silences. We looked down into it, this floating, veil-like shadow, and leaning over us that rock-built priest also looked down into it, but with greater intentness, it would seem.

Not long could the lads keep silent. They began to see companies and companies of marching men in these various shadowings. They described their movements, spied out their objectives. Presently they began to drill them—these legions of their restless minds. "Eyes right! Left turn! Form fours!"—a hundred voices (I thought I caught a hint of mimicry here and there in them), a hundred cries, and the rocks, awakened, bravely sent them back. At last I made them a little speech, and Felix MacSwiney dismissed them.

He and I then cut across the defile by a path I had not suspected, crossed the brawling stream, and made up the opposite slope of mountain. I was to sleep in his place. Leisurely we climbed, full of earnest talk, yet not unconscious of the beauty of the night, now so full of calm and silence after the chatter and the ringing cries. We struck at last into a little path. It widened. We came on the traces of a wheel track. Higher

up, the mass of a little hut, thatched to the ground it seemed, silhouetted itself suddenly against the sky. A tiny little window, dimly lighted, hid itself in under the thatch. I stepped up.

"That is?" I said.

" 'Tis there he lives," he answered, "Muirish."

"Alone?—not alone, there?" I asked again quickly.

"Why, yes, except for the dogs—a terrible breed. Whenever he goes into the village for supplies, they walk at his heels. I tell you I wouldn't be the man to take a try out of him and they about; they'd tear you."

We stepped towards it silently; we were soon within its shadow.

"We'll strike in," MacSwiney whispered.

"I'd rather not," I answered. An encounter with Muirish would quite exhaust, I felt, whatever little energy I had left. At the same time, I strained my eye against the little window, there was but one pane in it. I saw a couple of huge dogs, one a greyhound, lying about the hearth flag in the glow of the turves, curled up in sleep. Otherwise the place was empty. As I looked, the hound drew his shoulder-blades up around his ears, slowly and tensely, then suddenly relaxed them and lay still.

"There's no Muirish here," I whispered, when I was sure of the dog's sleeping.

"But, look! the candle is lighting; he's not in bed." MacSwiney raised his head; he was wondering where Muirish could be.

"He must be at my place," he said at last.

The saying was not too welcome to me; but I withdrew my eyes from the glowing and stilly interior, and made forward with him, not speaking a word. We were just about to step from the shadow of the hut into the flood of light when he stopped me.

"There! there !—look at him!"

His back towards us, dark as a pillar-stone, Muirish was standing on a boulder, a long staff in his hand. He was as still as the Priest's Tower itself, which we could see beyond him, standing high and lonely across and above the shadowy defile. The collie dog that stood beside him, its nose in the air, was no less still and alert than its master. The two together, they made a group very like that rocky tower beyond them. That at its own side and these at their side were holding vigil above the tumbled rocks, the waters and the shadows. The old man's attitude was one of listening, listening rather than peering: it was for that reason we held ourselves so still. He slowly raised his head, turned

round, and leaning heavily on the staff, descended from his point of vantage. We kept our stillness. He passed close to us, the dog sidling along at his right hand. He lifted the latch and went in, closing the door behind him.

"He was listening to our drilling," I said softly.

"That's it, surely," there was relief in my companion's voice. I could not help peeping once again through that dim pane of glass. He was seated on the settle, straight opposite my eyes. He sat rigid, intensely gathered into his thoughts. His sceptre lay beside him; his two fists fiercely clasped his shapeless felt hat against his breast. It was not a restful attitude, yet it would hold him for hours, one felt. He was far removed, whether into the past or future, who could say? Or whether he was making a prayer?

III

I will now tell of my third meeting with him. It was late in the summer of 1916—memorable year. I was on the run, or, in the phrase that goes through so many centuries of Irish history, I was on my keeping. I had been in the Post Office in Dublin during the whole of Easter Week. I had seen the ring of fire closing in around us, had gazed, fascinated, at the scared cats walk-

ing rather leisurely from the burning houses, had tended a friend whose reason had given away, had taken drugs to preserve my own. Now the police were chivying me and a thousand others, it would seem, from place to place. I had escaped them a hundred times. As an old woman I had walked through a party of them; I cursed them in Irish that they should think a son of mine one of them rebels! I opened the door to them in a country hotel—it was in Claremorris neighbourhood—and helped them search it, through and through. But one tires of being chivied from place to place in one's own country, and the idea that you will eventually be nabbed grows stronger and stronger, robbing you of the sense of rest; and I firmly believe what I have heard a friend of mine say—one who had led the police a very pretty dance indeed, right round the Five Fifths of Eirinn—that a feeling of voluptuous ease ran through him, as if his whole body smiled, when, after six months of it, a rough hand gripped him one night by the shoulder and held him fast.

It was in the city of Kilkenny—a place where the young men have the voice of history ever in their ears—that the thought came to me, "I will rise up at midnight and make for Monera in the quiet hills, and there I'll heal me of my grievous wound." I do not know why or how it

is, but when one is living as I was then, acting a part with which so many books of Irish history had made me familiar, a touch of the boy-heroic comes back into one's thoughts, into one's language (at least when alone), and no matter how much one may smile at the quaint phrases, they do bring a certain healing with them, as if one had made a fragment of song. To live dangerously is, I suppose, to live lyrically. My only wound was a deep melancholy that I could not shake off, let me rush as I would from place to place; and no sooner had I spoken the silly words than I really did feel some lightening of the strain of flight. In Monera, at MacSwiney's house, I would lie lost until my nerves were strong again. (And at the back of my mind there was perhaps, at the same time, the sly, malicious thought that I, who had risked all in the burning post office, would find out Muirish and fling his scornful "Wisha! Wisha! Wisha!" back into his teeth.)

I reached Monera, and made my way to MacSwiney's house at Kilsheelan. I walked into it just as his people, his mother and two sisters, were making the place ready for the night. They had had no tidings of me, had thought of me as among the unnamed dead, for they had come to know that I had never been deported to Frongoch with the other prisoners, had never appeared

before a court-martial. How their Irish welcome went round my heart! Gaels of the Gael, they received me, spoke to me, welcomed me, slaved for me in the true Gaelic spirit, and quite without knowing it. Their forefathers had been doing as much for the hunted Gaels of four centuries—those shadowy, unnamed warriors, poets, stragglers, kerns, gallowglasses, tories, rapparees, outlaws, white-boys, fenians—who would crowd on my imagination, unbidden, unlooked for, often in the most listless moments, the name of a bridge or hill, a flash of princely pride in a peasant boy's face, or a verse of vengeful curses from an old bedridden crone summoning them with rude potency from their haphazard graves. My heart opened. "Yes, I'm tired, God knows it, but . . . let us sit at the door, Felix, the night is too beautiful for sleep."

We did so, sitting there by each other on two boulders that helped to buttress the gable of his house. We talked quietly, even sadly, for our movement was broken, perhaps finished, yet not dishonoured: and the moon sloped across the Priest's Tower, looking at us with shining, wondering face, as a child might. We sank into silence, as if to let it go by; and I knew the blessedness of a somewhat wistful peacefulness.

Nothing is easier than to overstay your time on the heights; a moment later I had said to my

friend: "And Muirish? There's no change in him? He's the same cross-grained, cranky old fenian? We were only play-actors, he said. . . ." (That malicious thought was uttering itself.)

Felix rose up. He would not answer without a moment's delay. Silently he lifted himself, slowly, in tune with the thought that held him. Then, smiling, he stretched out a hand to the moonlit wall and took hold of a snail that was climbing it obliquely, leaving a silvery track; without looking at it he threw it behind him into the greenery. He wiped his fingers on his trousers. In my mind I was repeating: But Muirish? Muirish? However, Felix making no movement to sit again, I rose up beside him, saying: "There's a heavy dew, and you'll be rising early in the morning."

" 'Tis better go in," he said.

He slept that night on the settle, surrendering me his bed. He showed me into the little room, placed the candle on the table, and turned to go. He paused then and said: "As for Muirish—I'm getting frightened about him." His eyes looked at me. An unpleasant thought swept a shadow across my mind. I dismissed it with a toss of my head.

"Nonsense, I'd trust him; he's too old to change."

"Oh—not that! Not that! Muirish is as true

as steel. But he's not himself—that's what I mean. I'm uneasy about him, and he has no one with him."

I thought a moment.

"We'll go to see him," I said.

He bent his head. "I'd like it," he replied. "To-morrow night, then."

It was delicious rest I had that night. I was too tired to sleep, and indeed I hardly wished for sleep, my nerves were so perceptibly losing the sense of strain that had held them so long. I felt it slipping from me, quietly, quietly. And when I quenched the candle, above my eyes was the rich glow from the turf losing itself in the dark thatch and the dark roof-timbers, very warm and mellow. And sometimes, with a very thrill of delight, I would feel my mind open itself to the vision of the hundred thousand hill-tops that were outside those cosy walls—I would feel the moonlight bathing them in peace, and the cold stars above them. "Monera, Monera, Monera!" I whispered for very love of it, my spirit growing all the time from strength to strength. At last—there was Muirish as I had last seen him, a slab of stone with a skirt of shadow about it! Yet Monera! Monera! was what I still whispered while still beholding in vision the intense old figure watching and waiting above the vale, as if Monera and he were one. I ceased my lyric

word. I went into a deep stillness. Then I lifted myself on an elbow, and stared through the little window, on which the turf glow was dancing into the rich blue that lay beyond. But when I settled down again, with firm assurance of sleep, I knew what I should do next day. At breakfast I said:—

"Felix, as I came through Duhallow I discovered that the Volunteers were beginning to pull themselves together. . . ."

He caught at my hopefulness:—

"Do you wish it? Do you wish it?" he blurted out, in the quick way of the southron.

"Why shouldn't I wish it?" I said.

"I was afraid you'd throw cold water on it, you who were in the fight, who saw the surrender."

That very day Felix went around the valleys, and that same night we had as large a muster as before at the Priest's Tower. My commands rang bravely out; and the lads drilled with a seriousness that had had no place in our previous drillings. I went cold to think suddenly that the next fight, if ever it came, would be fought out to the cry, "Revenge!" Almost in silence we dismissed the company, and, as before, made for the lonely hut.

A voice suddenly startled us:—

"You'll come in, you'll come in?"

Muirish was making down on us, with a nerv-

ous swiftness in his plunging forward that frightened me. Felix spoke as quickly in reply:—

"We were going up. Be careful, Muirish."

"Ah—you were drilling, I heard ye, I heard ye. Say it, say it?" He was shaking with excitement.

"We were," I answered.

"I do be deceiving myself, I do be fancying I hear voices." His hand went across his brow.

"It was our voices, the lads, you heard."

"Come in, come in, I want ye."

We followed him in.

"Felix," he said; "'tis the same?"

He looked at me, he looked at Felix.

"The same," Felix answered; "and he was in the fight in Dublin—he's a hunted man."

"Ah! Ah!" He was caressing my hand. "Sit there, my son." I sat down.

"Felix," he said, "maybe you'd leave this young man and myself the freedom of the place for a while?"

Felix sprang up.

"Since you wish it, Muirish." There was respect and understanding in the voice.

"'Tis kind for him to be like that," the old man said when the door had closed again on us.

The place was not different: there was his staff close to his hand; there were his dogs—the great

hound's body taking beautiful curves in his sleep; but the old man was shrunken away a good deal from what he was when last I saw him, and his boldness of address was gone.

"Wait now," he said, and I could see the concentration it needed before he could say what was in his mind; it was visible in his rapt stillness, in his bent brows. After a long and, for me, nervous pause, my mind running on Felix's fear, he said:—

"Ye held out a week." He was, of course, talking of our fight in Dublin. There followed a deeper silence than before. Then he thrust his head forward into mine, and his fierce old eye held me.

"Cogar," he said, "it wasn't any shortage of powder and ball betrayed ye?"

I was glad to be able to answer him:—

"Oh, no, not at all—except, except in one place, perhaps, and even there——"

"What's that—what's that you're saying?"

He had clutched my shoulder, I was trembling to his trembling.

"In one place . . . where young Heuston was, they say the ammunition ran out . . ."

His clutch fell off and he sat back, a figure of stone, before me. For a moment I knew that he neither felt nor saw nor thought; I grew afraid.

"But what did that matter?" I rushed out my

words. "In either case he would have had to give in when the general surrender came. No, Muirish, no; it was not want of ammunition——"

"You're sure?"

"I'm sure."

"You're sure, young man; you're sure of it?"

His clutch on me again, he would shake the truth from me.

"As sure as I'm sitting here."

His grip released, but not the force in his voice.

"Then what was it?"

"It was want of, want of, . . . everything! Want of men, want of . . . everything!"

"I suppose it was," he said, very quietly. "'Tis I should know." His face turned away from me, and I was glad for it. His lips pursed themselves out, and when, after long thought it seemed to me, he spoke again, it was not to me alone he spoke:—

"Them big guns of theirs, a mint of money wouldn't buy even one of them."

"You may sing it," I said.

He thought again:—

"But that's no excuse for me."

I did not understand him. I said nothing. He rose up.

"If I go into that caboose of mine," he said, nodding at a little ramshackle room he had made at the gable end away from us, "you'll maybe

wait till I come back to ye?" It was an old man's speech.

"Of course I'll wait," I returned.

He went slowly across the earthen ground, and I soon heard him searching for something in the little place beyond. . . . He was coming. A little ticken bag it was that he held out to me.

"Take it," he said.

There were coins in it and notes.

"No, no; I couldn't dream of it. Things are so dear, you'll want it; besides——"

"Even if I did want it," he smiled at me, "I couldn't touch it; 'tisn't mine to make free with. Them that entrusted it to me—they're cold this thirty years—'twasn't for that they left it with me. Take it, young man, and sorry I am I didn't make it over on ye when ye were here before."

"That's fenian gold," I said.

"It is, and for fifty years I have kept my grip on it."

"It will get to the right quarters, never fear," I said bravely.

He was smiling to himself. He spoke now in a quiet voice:—

" 'Tis queer," he began, "but 'tis often I found myself speaking to that little bag of gold the same as if it would be a Christian man. 'Ye're useless,' I'd say to it; 'I may as well throw ye into

the river. If I hand ye over to the young men nowadays 'tis on the hounds they'd spend ye, or on the goaling, maybe.' That's what I'd say to it; and yet I was wrong; 'tis them very same young lads made the fight in Dublin, so they tell me. But an old man's mind, 'tis a queer contrivance."

" 'Tis wanted now worse than ever," I said.

That pleased him.

"Do you tell me so? And it wouldn't have made any difference if I gave it to ye before?"

"Not a bit of difference," I said.

" 'Tis a great consolation ye're giving me. I was broken with thinking on it. I tell you, a man can be too wise and too careful and too mistrustful. And I was always like that. But 'tis in ease I'll lay my head down in my empty house this night. Good night to ye."

He had hobbled with me to the door. I paused. I looked up into his face; I suddenly thought of what I would say to him; I would hearten him with those four lines that were ever and always in our thoughts, of how decay would as surely come upon the English as it had come upon Alexander and Cæsar:—

"Do threasgair an saol is do shéid an ghaoth mar smál
Alastram, Cæsar is an mhéid do bhí 'na bpáirt;
Tá an Teamhair 'na féar is féach an Traoi mar tá,
'S na Sasanaigh féin, dob' fhéidir go bhfaighdís bás."

He drank them in, he swallowed them with open mouth.

"Again! Again!" he said; and again I repeated them, I knew he was making them his own. I knew, too, I had given him in perfect form the whole burden and pressure of his thoughts. He turned in, wondering how that could be—wondering, yet comforted, comforted for ever.

ON THE HEIGHTS

ON THE HEIGHTS

I

A STRANGER handed in a little slip of paper at the door of the farmhouse in Acharas where I had been hiding for several weeks: within ten minutes of receiving it I was on my bicycle, was flying at break-neck speed down mountainy bohereens, one after another, crossing through watercourses without dismounting, and skimming the sharp corners of boulders by half inches or less. And yet I was all but caught! Only for their hooting, as their motor swerved from the main road, I had ridden into their arms. I caught that hoot! hoot! and flung from my path by very instinct; slap-dash in among the rocks and furze I went, went as far as I could, then threw myself off on the heather, and breathing like a swimmer after a long swim against time, could do nothing but wait, helpless. Puffing and panting on my knees, I could see them between the rocks: with frowning determination they were putting their heavy military motor at the hill, and I recognised the sergeant in charge. "Mullery!" I gasped, and grabbed my handlebar again by

instinct. If I fell into Mullery's hands, it meant five years: he was a man that would swear anything. When they had gone by, I mounted again, and swept into Gougane Barra by the back road, and was just making on for Keimaneigh when something spoke in my ear—perhaps it was the old Gaelic saints who lie there at rest—"They will have set a watch in Keimaneigh: take the mountains." And so, instead of taking the comfortable if heavy road through the Pass of Keimaneigh, I made straight for Cqomroe, facing the great walls of rock that enclose that most impressive of mountain glens. I have never heard that any other mortal ever pushed a bicycle up the one thousand eight hundred feet of jagged rock that hangs above the inches there; but I did it, how I do not know, unless it was the vision of that dogged face in the motor car that kept me ever pushing on and on and up and up.

As I shoved, dragged, slided, lifted my wheels up the rocks, the sweat ran freely and warmly down my back and limbs. I gave it no thought, I felt no weariness. But when I reached the summit and expected to see the sun again, a cold sea wind struck me, refreshed me, and then, suddenly, chilled me; and up before me rose a wall of white mist. I looked for the mountain-peaks that used to guide me there, but none were visible in the

cloud. Feeling it all around me, licking and stroking me, and remembering how warm it had been in the coom, I knew I was making into a night of rain; and there are no wetter hills in the whole of Munster. As I went forward I tried to recollect the whereabouts of the nearest house in those forlorn uplands, but all my landmarks were blotted out. I came suddenly on a close-huddled flock of black-faced mountainy sheep; they looked at me and scampered off into the mists with timid cries; they, too, seemed to be waiting for the rain. I felt lonelier than before. The pursuit was over and done with—years ago, it appeared. I thought of it no more. Could I make the Coomahola river before nightfall, was the only question that would rise up in my mind, as I pushed my bicycle now over the shale and then through growths of fragrant bog-myrtle. And it would come into my mind, too, that though I was making forward with fair speed I was doing no good, for I did not know where I was going. Yet somehow I feared to stop. I stumbled on and on, till suddenly I saw beside me a flat table of rock, about two feet high, as perfectly shaped as if stonecutters had worked at it. Before I had willed it, it seemed, I was sitting on it with a sense of delicious ease. "I will think out exactly where I am and where I will go," I said,

comforting myself with a pretence of will power that I knew well was but a pretence. Then down came the rain, slanting from the south-west.

II

I bowed my head to it in sheer hopelessness —and that action it was that saved me. Beneath my eyes I saw certain light marks on the ground, not wheel marks—they were not more than two feet six apart, and besides they were not cut into the ground. I was instantly following them. I knew what they were. They were the marks of a "tray," as the peasants of that place call it both in Irish and English—a sort of light sleigh on which they bring down the cut turf from places in the uplands that are too steep for horse and cart. These marks meant a house, sooner or later. With the greatest care I kept to them. And soon I began to come on other signs of human ways and strivings—a cairn of stones, a first effort at a clearance, then a crazy sort of boundary fence, long abandoned to its own will, then at last two forked stakes in the ground, a young ash sapling laid across them, closing a gap. I blessed the human touch: the pious hands of husbandry had made it! Then I struck the path.

The night thickened, and the rain thickened;

but now with the path beneath my feet, all broken shale it was, I did not mind. I thought I might leave my bicycle there until I had found the house, which I knew to be somewhere in the darkness. I laid it in the dripping heather and made more swiftly on. (I recovered it next day, clean as a new pin.) A waft of turf smoke struck me. I breathed it in with wide nostrils. My spirits rose, I could shout out. Then in a pit of darkness beneath me to the right I saw the tiny little eye of a lamplit window, warm-coloured, and looking as if its kindly gleam had been peering out that way on the hills for thousands and thousands of years, so steady it was. I used no caution. I made for it through the blackness, and lost the path. I found myself stumbling down the side of a little ravine—I splashed through a leaping stream, I almost fell upon the door. I banged it with my fist. I heard movement within, a collie whined, voices whispered. I could not wait. I banged again, and the rain pelted my warm wrist. I caught the latch and shook the door. "Open! Open!" I cried. Within, I heard the bolts being withdrawn.

A low-toned, uncertain voice spoke in my face:—

"Who are you? What is it you want? Come in. You're all wet."

A dull-looking, middle-aged man and his wife,

a soft-featured, kindly creature, drew back from me, and continued to stare at me; I felt annoyed at their doubtful reception; there was no heartiness in it.

"I'm wet all right," I said, trying to speak calmly; but then I added with a bitterness I could not help, "there are more than me on the hills these times, and better than me."

By these words I would give them to understand why I was on the hills.

The man's jaw fell; he looked at his wife; they stared at me helplessly, even more stupidly than before, I thought, and more frigidly. He came one step towards me and whispered:—

"Maybe you'd speak low? Maybe you would?"

What did he mean?

"Draw up to the fire; take your coat off," the woman said, handing me a towel to wipe my face.

"Why should I speak low? Is there anyone sick?" I said, looking at the poor staring creature that was man of the house.

"No, no; there's no one sick, thanks be to God; glory be to His Holy Name!"

He was smiling at me in an indeterminate sort of way, his jaw hanging. He was a weak-mouthed man, I could see. He went doddering away. His wife pointed to the door in the partition at the end of the room.

"The old man, his father—he's asleep within, and he's noisy if anyone wakes him."

That then was why I should speak low. I understood. I had met such old men before—Lears, but Lears who get the best of the bargain, maintaining their rights of property to the very day that they have to step into the grave. We found ourselves speaking in whispers, all three of us, I trying to explain how I found the track to their lonely door and they wondering how I had missed the wider track across the hills. After all, they were a good-hearted couple and could enjoy a chat—if one carried it on in whispers.

The man raised his head suddenly: we all listened. The winds were coming up from Bantry Bay, they were roaring upon the roof. As we listened, in flew the door with a crash, the fire was scattered on the hearth, the sheep dog sprang from his sleep, planted his legs and howled at the storm. We all flung ourselves on the door. In the sudden tumult I forgot myself. As we got the door to I shouted with vast enjoyment:—

"There! there! stay outside now—with Sergeant Mullery," I added under my breath.

"Hush! hush! sir; lave ye."

Both man and wife were terrified, it seemed. They were looking towards the end of the room.

I put my hand to my mouth, hunching my shoulders, and turning like them towards the unseen

sleeper—how we leap at moments back into our childhood! But too late, too late. Three dreadful blows were struck on that partition towards which we were all looking, and an aged but vigorous and indignant voice cried out above the storm in ringing Irish:—

"Am I to be kept always in the dark? Ever and always! Look at me, and I for the last hour killed with listening to your foolery—and dogs —and giggling—and the stranger's voice stunning me; and 'tisn't worth your while, Shawn, to come in with a little word."

Man and wife were trying to smile at me; but I could see that they were used to getting the worse of it. They did not know what was best to do.

"I'll answer him," I said. They clutched me.

"No, no," they were whispering warmly in my face; "no, sir; no sir."

I cried out in Irish as ringing as his own:—

"You'd drive a stranger from your door, this night?" Half in jest, half in earnest, I spoke the words. The winds were roaring with a great voice; I could hear the cataracts pouring.

" 'Tis no decent person would be travelling the hills this night," I was answered, and there was suspicion and challenge in the tones.

"There's a more decent person on your floor this night," I answered back, and in spite of myself my voice was hard and rough, "a more decent person than ever walked this hungry land since St. Finnbarr left it, travelling to the east."

"Left it and blessed it," the voice answered me in triumph.

"I doubt it," I answered, and my anger was gone; and there came swiftly over me a joyousness to think of the two of us shouting at each other there in that lonely land with the roaring storm outside, grandest of orchestras.

"I doubt it," I cried, in a great voice.

"He did," he answered.

"I doubt it."

"'Tis well known; the authors say so!"

My heart opened to him! How often I had heard that or similar phrases from his like! "Se adeir na h-ughdair . . ."

"If he did, ye ought to remember it, and not drive a stranger from. . . ."

"There's no one doing the like; but haven't I the right to complain if my son will not tell me who 'tis comes in or goes out? Come in to me, Shawn, and let you make the stranger his meal, Nora."

Shawn went in to him, having first looked despairingly at his wife, who smiled back en-

couragingly. I felt I had not fathomed any one of the three of them.

"He'll be in his sleep in a moment," she said to me in a whisper. "You gave him his answer." She was more courageous than the man.

III

I made free with the big teapot of black tea she made me, and with the lovely bread, laughing to myself and yet wondering. After a while Shawn returned to us on tiptoe from the old man's room, and, silenced, we could hear the deep and vigorous breathing of his father.

I began telling them of the detestable war bread the people in the cities and towns had to eat, and of the great scarcity of everything among them; they sighed over them, the poor creatures! And so the night passed. I began to wonder why they did not suggest retiring, for it was now near midnight. I began to yawn involuntarily, and to measure the settle with my eyes. I had often slept on one. They were again confused. At last the man, who was certainly an extraordinarily gentle creature, touched my sleeve shyly and said: "The only place we have for you to sleep in is with himself,"

he nodded towards the partition. I was just about to say, "What about the settle?" when I thought suddenly that there were but the two rooms in the house; I glanced about and saw that the press on which the candle was lighting was of course a folded-up bedstead. Yet I didn't answer: I did not relish the thought of sleeping with a person I had just quarrelled with.

"You could slip in—quietly. He sleeps sound."

I smiled at him.

"Go in," I said, throwing myself erect, "and tell him the police and the soldiers are on my track, and see what he'll say?"

I felt sure that anyone who kept the "authors" in his thoughts would not refuse a corner of his bed to a rapparee. I was surprised how they took my words! Had they not known it?

"No, no," they both cried warmly at me; "not that way at all," the man moved about the flags in trouble.

" 'Tis better say no word about the soldiers or police at all," the wife urged; "only that 'tis how a tourist is after losing his way in the fogs, a tourist was fishing in Loch Fada. Go on, Shawn, and tell him that; 'tis a story will do no one any harm."

I consented, and Shawn went very timidly into

his father's presence. We listened; yet there was no noise between them, no squabbling at all. He came out gesturing that the way was clear. About midnight I stepped very carefully over the old man's rather bulky figure, to take my share of the huge old bed.

"Out the candle," he growled at me. Timidly enough I mumbled an apology, and did so. Outside, the winds shrieked among the upland gullies and the waters fell in them.

IV

I awoke with some dim feeling of annoyance. It was pitch dark and the storm was still roaring, but near by was an unceasing whisper, a sharp hissing of breath between teeth and lips: the old man, hunched up in the bed, was praying. I dozed off again, and again I woke, and the hissing was still going on beside me. He was, I suspected, carrying out a practice of fifty or sixty years' standing. To the roaring winds outside he was deaf: he knew their voices better than I. I was listening to them, to him, thankful for the nest of warmth and peace I found myself in. I would occasionally hear the rattle of his beads, and from the sound could guess at their huge size.

Dozing again, I heard him gather them up; and then I am quite clear I heard the words, " . . . and for the souls of all the men they put to death in Dublin!" His voice fell to a whisper, and a vigorous "Amen!" finished his prayers, as with a clasp. He shrugged the clothes up about his shoulders, groped under the pillow, and settled himself to sleep. A sudden rush of thought and feeling swept over me. "The souls of all the men they put to death in Dublin," I repeated, and I thought of this lonely old man praying for them in this unknown cabin on the uplands. In the phrase of the people,I was glorified to think of it.

V

Yet presently I fell to wondering why his son and his son's wife had implored me not to tell him that I was a hunted man on the hills. I could not understand it.

VI

I awoke in the bright morning to find the old man's fingers touching and feeling my brow with great gentleness. He started when my eyes

glared up at him. It was then I saw him for the first time with any distinctness. He had a fringe of white, wool-white whiskers in under his shaven chin; he looked like a shepherd in an old play or in a picture; but there was a keenness and a sharpness about the brow—an alertness that made one forget this first thought of him. Seeing how he had started, I greeted him in good Irish. He smiled at me:—

"You're no tourist was fishing Loch Fada," he said, knowingly. I listened a moment; there was no stir in the room outside. I felt sure they had not yet risen, had not yet been speaking to him. The sun was bathing the hills, a robin was singing. Even in the little darksome cabin there was an air of freshness and gladness.

"What am I, then?" I said.

"You're no tourist," he said again, with the same wise and, I thought, encouraging smile.

"But what am I?"

"I'll tell you: you're one of them!" He gave me a slow, antique wink; it was like a gesture. "I was one of them myself and I young," he added. He flung up his head.

"It wasn't I told you I was a tourist."

"No, 'twas himself. But you, 'twas yourself, and no one else, told me—told me what I know. Brother," he said, using the familiar word among the Gaels, "you were dreaming . . .

powerful dreams!" What wild foolery had I been crying out in my sleep! His eyes were full of vision—my dreams!

" 'Twill come to pass," he said, "the authors foretold it." I had no reply, except to stare at him, his face aglow, bending upon mine.

"But isn't this a pitiful thing," he grew mournful above me, "that man outside, that son of mine—he's a thing without courage, he's like a sheep after being worried by the dogs, he is that! He'd be afraid to hang a bit of green on the door, or to keep a gun in the house. I'm sick and tired of him. But look, forgive me the welcome I gave you: these times there do be men in plain clothes going from house to house, innocent-looking slobs of men, gathering up information, and that pair outside, I must be watching them. 'Tisn't too much I'd tell them." He repeated that solemn wink of his.

VII

I left him still in his bed, and I sat at breakfast with the two others.

"You got on all right with himself?"

"I did, I did, then."

"He's a bit cross sometimes: he was a Fenian in the old days."

"He told me so."

They looked sharply at me. They were wondering how much he had told me. And in that state of mind I left them.

COWARDS

COWARDS

I

ROSSADOON is a promontory on the Kerry coast. It ends in two blunt points that are not unlike the unshapely fingers of a giant's hand in a Scandinavian story, only that one of them, that on the northern side, is bigger in every way than the other, built up of huger cliffs, and so higher and freer of the winds and the clouds. Yet it was that northern point that the hardy people of old chose, when Christianity was still young in the land, to give to God, building their little stone church of four simple walls upon it, and burying their dead between that little church and the steep edge of the cliff. Of that early church only fragments of broken walls remain; hundreds of years must have passed since Mass was last sung there above the sea; but the crowded gravestones, many of them too neat, too new, tell us that the people of Rossadoon lay their dead of to-day with those that died over a thousand years ago. Too neat, too new, indeed, those shapely stones; and

those on which one meets with such an inscription as:—

"Sacred to the memory of John O'Riordan, of New Inn. . . . Erected by his son, Michael J. O'Riordan, of Portland, Maine, U. S. A."

those are seldom in keeping with the place. Yet there, on North Point, among the crowded graves, will soon be erected a monument far bigger, far richer than any of those that American dollars have paid for. It will be set up above the grave of Tomas O'Miodhachain, and the inscription, in the purest of Gaelic phrasing, will tell how he died in Mountjoy Prison for sake of that land for which so many others like him have died in every age.

And so Tomas O'Miodhachain is gone home for ever to North Point, in Rossadoon—lying within ten fields of where he was born.

Colonel Hastings, too, has gone home, as if for ever, it seems, to his old grey weather-beaten house in South Point. And it was on the self-same day that those two men of Rossadoon went home —the rebel and the colonel. But, as for that bright-faced boy—the colonel's only son, Edward Pendrift Hastings, who, in a certain way, saw them home—he had gone home before either of them, not, however, to South Point with his

father, nor to North Point with the rebel: in a soldier's grave he rests, not far from Arras.

II

It was on a day of bright grey mists, those mists that seem to hide not one but many suns, that the poor wasted body of the rebel was brought by train, like any other dead thing, to Cappaban. There its guard of young Republican Volunteers from Dublin delivered it into the keeping of the local company of Republican Volunteers from Rossadoon. The funeral procession was soon faced to the west, faced against that straggling, winding, up-and-down hillside road of rock and shale, which, growing ever narrower and narrower for seven miles, passes at last, as a mere track in the heather, between broken walls into the graveyard on the Point. At the start there seemed to be three funerals rather than one: in the middle of the road the gathered Volunteer companies of the whole countryside marched evenly and compactly, far too numerous and too fierce-minded to take any check from the squads of silent, heavily-armed police that were gathered at every corner of the road,—marched with pipe music and draped drums and draped

flags, the coffin in the midst of them, wrapped in the bright Republican colours, looking like an enamelled jewel-case against the hillsides, dim and grey in the mists. But on either hand of the steady, disciplined marching of the Volunteers there streamed along an irregular crowd of the people of the countryside: men, women and children, old and young, with here and there an old farmer from the hills on horseback, his brain alight and fiery with memories of other fights, other heroic deaths, other memorable funerals. Later on, those horsemen, and indeed the whole throng, would of themselves form too into processional order and take their place behind the drilled men about the coffin, but at the start the three bodies moved along the road in a silence that was full of hidden, fiery thoughts, as the mists were full of hidden suns.

The countrymen from Cappaban and Rossbuidhe and Rossadoon itself, although they gave every heed to it, could not march like the pale-faced men who had brought the body with them from Dublin; but ever since Tomas O'Miodhachain himself had left them two and a half years before, their drilling had been neglected; and many a one of them, now swinging awkwardly along, had a thought that the lifeless clay in their midst was conscious of this lack of training in their

bearing, was somehow rebuking them. Yes, the Dublin men marched better; but it was not that alone that set them apart, not that alone but this: they had realised, unlike the men in faraway Kerry, what death by starvation in a cell in Mountjoy really means, had weighed it against the other deaths that are incident to rebels—death in a hot fight, death in the dawn, facing a firing squad, death on the scaffold—and come to feel that more than any one of them it tested the spirit within, the spirit itself, unaided and alone. As they marched now in unbroken silence, without the least glancing to right or left, their lips seemed uniformly thin and set, their brows uniformly pale and bent and hard, for each of them was marching on in the silence of loneliness. And somehow as the march went steadily on, climbing the hill with no abatement of speed or steadiness, this realisation of what death in prison really means, had meant to their own neighbour's boy, began to rule in the spirit of the whole throng, as well as in that of the men of Dublin, to unify them, to silence them, to stiffen them. Even from a distance one seemed to notice it, to yield to it, as to something severe and terrible and threatening; and then were it not for the relief and the release that was in the music of the pipes one would scream out.

III

Colonel Hastings, sitting high in his trap, did not notice it, did not cry out, did not even catch the wild music that was shrilling from sea to sea. He had been away from home for the past fortnight, had been to the War Office in London, was now making for home in a chilling silence. He would have driven straight on and into the procession, his road cutting across its road, if his man had not touched his arm:—

"That's the funeral—the crowd passing——"

"What funeral?" The colonel was staring and frowning at the black mass streaming so earnestly forward.

"The Sinn Feiner's funeral," the man answered, timidly. "Tom Mehigan's funeral, the boy that died in Dublin, in prison. They wouldn't like us to break into them. . . ."

Then, perhaps, the colonel did notice that strange stiffness, that severity in the marching.

"Why should I?" he whispered, in so strange a voice, so choked a voice, that his man glanced up at him from under his brows.

And so they sat there, the colonel two cushions higher than his man, while the funeral flowed by below them on the road. The discoloured leaves of the trees dropped their mist-drops noisily about them.

Were he half the age he was, the colonel might have stepped into the ranks of the pale-faced men and marched with them. Like theirs, his brows, too, were bent, his lips thin and set, his eyes as hard as steel. And the voice that had whispered so strangely went well with this look of inhumanity, so new to him. It was this star-like gleam, this aloofness from the common warm stir of life, that made him akin to the young men from Dublin. His man, daring to touch his sleeve, had expected from him an outburst of fury, at the least a snap of vexation. His mind was full of the last meeting between the rebel and the colonel. It was at the one recruiting meeting that was ever held in Rossadoon. The colonel had made his speech, had announced that he was sending his only son into the army, had asked the young lads of the place to step forward like men and join him. Not one had stepped forward. How the colonel's eye blazed up, how he trembled with passion, how he flung his head in the air!

"I tell you what you are, you're cowards, cowards!" And then, his man remembered now, Tom Mehigan, in one spring, had leaped on to the fence beside the colonel:—

"'Tis the cowards that go!"

"'Tis the cowards that stay!"

"'Tis the cowards that go!"

" 'Tis the cowards that stay—by their dams!"

Too excited to catch up the phrase or its meaning, Tomas O'Miodhachain had then gripped the colonel's shoulder with his left hand, had flung his right towards the son who stood pale-faced by in silence:—

" 'Tis he's the coward to go!"

" 'Tis you're the coward to stay—you and your men," and the colonel wrenched himself free and raised his whip.

"Strike me!"

Then many men had leaped in between them, the police inspector led the colonel to his trap (this self-same trap), his men formed themselves into a thick body around it, and the Loyalist party moved off, the whole meeting remaining behind them intact, holding the ground as won, and chanting in a single voice:—

"Wrap the green flag round me, boys,
To die were far more sweet,
With Erin's noble emblem, boys,
To be my winding sheet."

It was wise for Tomas to leave Rossadoon after that; he went to Dublin.

All this was present to the old man when he touched the colonel's sleeve; but as soon as he heard his master's voice, "He's after hearing some terrible thing in London," he thought, and

he glanced timidly from under his brows at the frozen face.

It was to get some account of his son's death in France that the colonel had gone to London. It was thought he would even go to France. Here he was come back far sooner than expected, cold and silent and aloof.

IV

Until they stopped up to let the crowds pass, the colonel had not spoken one word, had glanced neither to the right hand nor to the left hand. He did not even raise his eyes when, after long driving, his own place, still three miles away, rose up, like an old grey castle, against the rim of the grey sea. He had only stared straight ahead; and yet for all that would have driven into the midst of the crowds on the road if his man had not checked him. That old man, Maurice Dineen was his name, gave his master the true pity of the old retainer. Indeed he had to struggle with himself to keep his silence. He could have, and how willingly would have, broken out into a wild lament for the dead boy, in which there would be thoughts and words and phrases that no Hastings that ever lived could make himself for his relief. He had known the boy, had

loved him, and loved him now the more for his hard fate, of which he had thoughts that must never be expressed.

Beyond count of time now, a tiny drop of rebelly Irish blood would suddenly leap to the surface in every generation of the Hastings. As in many another of the Garrison houses, their memoirs are parti-coloured. There's the story of one of them who fought for King James at the Boyne, of another who died fighting with the Wild Geese against the English at Fontenoy, of another who held lands in trust for the Papists when to do so was a high crime, of another who voted against the Union. And fortune has taken care that whatever there is of romance in these memoirs hangs around those wilder bloods that would not keep the safe path. When the young heir went to Trinity, what must he do but begin to learn Irish and lisp sedition! The old people at home shook their heads and smiled; "A true Hastings!" they said. Then came the war; and the young lad was brought home and sent into the army. If he showed no inclination for it, he made no protest. Every other Garrison house in the country was doing the same. After all, that was the tradition. And, once in the army, he went through the mill of training with such high spirits and brightness that the old colonel, in his delight, used to read his letters to his visitors,

slapping the pages with the back of his fingers and saying: "A true Hastings." But when the Rising came and the sixteen leaders, some of whom the lad had met with in the literary circles of Dublin, were executed, group after group, the colonel no longer read to his visitors the letters that were still coming to him from France, for they had become critical and snappish—and occasionally framed little lyrics and sonnets on Ireland—A true Hastings!

V

The procession had all but passed. Groups of women in black shawls and black cloaks were fussily making forward, five or six abreast, to be in time for the last prayers and the shots above the dead. They were too hurried for speaking. But a rough man's voice began to cry out, incoherently and indistinctly, so that it was hard to catch his words: "I'm as worthy to walk as any of ye! 'Tisn't Tom Mehigan would reject me—the Lord have mercy on his soul. I'm as good an Irishman as any of ye, and Tom wouldn't deny that!" There was then but a mumbling, and then a cry more passionate than before: "Don't mind me coat, lave ye! Don't mind it. Better men than me, they wore it and had to wear it. Don't mind

it, lave ye." There was again a silence, and the very end of the procession, old men limping on sticks and little girls hurrying them forward, went by, too earnest to notice the outcry of the drunken soldier. "I'm as ready to die for me country as any of ye. But no, I'm rejected! The little boys, they wouldn't have me, I'd disgrace them! The old soldier would disgrace them!" There was wild indignation and surprise in the words.

The colonel's horse was now slowly, and with nervous forelegs, stepping down the steep road. The colonel saw the open road below him clear for a moment, but suddenly a huge, untidy figure in khaki, with a red, flushed, dribbling face, came headlong into the space; staring after the crowds ascending the road from him, his two arms wide in the air, he looked like a blind man on an unfamiliar road, groping and sprawling. He was returning on his phrases,"Don't mind me coat, lave ye; better men than me had to wear it." But the crowds were now too far from him; he turned and lurched to the corner where the roads met, and was about to fling himself there on the soft grass when he caught sight of the colonel. He drew himself up, steadied himself, and a strange and troubled look struggled in his eyes, and his poor dribbling lips worked a little. He saluted, and then, as if that was not enough, he quickly snatched the cap from his head and held

it in his hands against his breast, as the people do when a religious procession is passing by. The colonel, grey and cold, still staring with fixed eyes, went on as if he had neither seen nor heard; but out burst the drunken voice again, warm and broken with sympathy: "Don't mind them, sir; he was no coward; so he wasn't. He was no more a coward than that boy they're burying on the hill. He was a gentleman, he was, and good to the men, and if 'twas fighting for the ould land he was, by Christ, they wouldn't have to shoot him for cowardice!"

The colonel sprang bolt upright in his trap, blind and deaf and maddened. He clutched the whip and lashed his animal. He tried to speak to it. It was rearing in the shafts, its head tossing. "Home, home!" he cried to it at last, hoarsely, hardly audible. The horse leaped forward and flew like the wind.

And so the colonel lies buried in the old grey house on the South Point, almost as deeply, it would seem, as Tomas O'Miodhachain lies buried in his grave on the North Point, or his own dishonoured son in his unmarked sleeping place in France. God be his comforting.

SEUMAS

SEUMAS—I

I

WHEN I struck on him he was shooting through the crowds in Patrick street, his pale, earnest, winsome face thrust out, his lips parted.

"Not so fast, not so fast," I said, holding him up.

"Oh! Oh!—you'll come? You'll be very useful!"

Who ever refused him! His shining, long-lashed eyes—too large! too beautiful!—were already searching my face for consent; his slender hand, his delicate fingers were touching my coat lapel.

"Where? where?" I laughed.

The pale hand leaped from me like a spring and feverishly began plucking sixpenny novels from all his pockets, within his coat, without. Many of the books were old and tattered, many had no covers; the covers of the others were blood-red, flaring, with the author's portrait for centrepiece. He thrust them into my hands; one or two of them fell, and "The Baron's Sons," "The Baron's Sons," "The Baron's Sons," I read on every one of them.

I asked him what in the name of Dr. Maurus Jokai did it all mean.

"Weapons!" He was still searching, his head bent, "bombs! I'm collaring the market before the censor finds it out. I have searched all Cork, all except two little shops. Only two more. And you'll do them. You will? Or look! You'll do the one in Douglas street; I'll take the other. I know the poor man. He's deaf. 'Tis near the North Gate bridge——"

"Wait, wait, give us a chance. I'm to get more of these?" I flapped my books at him.

"Of course; and hurry."

"But why?"

"Because the censor will find them out, and then——"

"But what for?"

"You'll understand. Don't believe a word he says——"

"Who?"

"The man in Douglas street. Shove him about, he's frightfully slow. You must throw the tables and chairs aside—and decanters. 'Tis behind them I always get anything I want."

II

Of course I went, hot-foot. No one ever refused him. As Monica O'Sullivan used to say,

the rhythm of him was Mozartian. "Think of Mozart"—this was her way of putting it—"forget the world awhile—its slow pulse—go to him, his music, I mean, and there's Seumas! The sunny earnestness, never sour, never dark—even how the game was going." A true description, and it explains why one could no more refuse oneself to him than to Mozart. For a moment you would; but then you threw yourself upon him, coveting burdens, lest he might think you were not in earnest.

In the little shop in Douglas street, after swallowing pints of dust and getting great rhomboidal slices of it on my shoulders and knees, I hauled out two new sixpenny copies. I wondered whether Seumas would be satisfied with such a harvest; anyway I went to our rooms. He soon came in. He looked hungry and fagged, all except his shining eyes: trafficking in dusty second-hand bookshops was no work for such lungs as his. But he was triumphant; he also had found two, one of which was filthy and full of candle wax:—

"This is for myself," he flourished. "I wouldn't part with it for the world. A student's copy! 'Tis stiff with midnight wax on it—Sheares street tallow. I'd know it anywhere."

I threw my lovely twins on the table. "There!"

He admired them. He was satisfied with me.

"But I'll keep this for ever: it smells of tobacco." He thrust the filthy thing into a deep inside breast pocket where he usually kept a number of Pearse's pamphlets.

"But I don't understand; what are you going to do with them—the others? You're not going to burn them?"

"No;" he kept on slapping them free of dust, "'tis they'll do the burning."

"Now,"—he divided the heap, giving me the cleaner lot—"if you meet Murphy—John Francis—or Hillary, or Tubby—you just deliver your goods. You'll say: 'Hillary, maybe you have never read Dr. Maurus Jokai's great book, "The Baron's Sons"?'—give it out like that, very seriously, and he'll take it. John Francis—you must manage him yourself. But don't give it till he promises to read it."

"But they'll meet; they'll suspect something; they'll smell a rat."

"Ah, they'll have come on Mausmann by then!"

"Mausmann!" It sounded like a furtive pun. I stared at him.

"For the sake of Mausmann have I spent my five bob—except Mausmann, there's nothing in it. See here,"—he was turning the pages and talking at the same time,—"Mausmann was a

student—look here." He began to read; I read, too, my eyes following his taper finger:—

"At that moment there appeared from the opposite direction an odd-looking, long-legged student, with three enormous ostrich plumes waving in his hat and a prominent red nose dominating his thin smooth-shaven face. A tricoloured sash crossed his breast, while a slender parade sword, girt high up under his arm to prevent his stumbling over it, hung at his side. . . ."

"There you are," cried Seumas, in high delight; "he's worth a battalion to us, I tell you he is. That nose of his, and the plumes. . . ."

I began to see a glimmer of an idea in his scattering of Jokai's book among his fellow-students. They are not great readers, they come for the most part from homes quite innocent of books, but the worst of them would read a novel, moreover a revolutionary novel; and Seumas, I took it, hoped that this long-legged student should help to quicken the pace.

A student known as "Commercial Career" came in, and I saw Seumas present him with a copy not without some ceremony. "I don't know any book," he said, with great seriousness, "that gives one the hang of that blasted Austro-Hungarian squabble like it—you'll find it simplify—the riddle of the Hapsburgs, I tell you. . . ."

"Commercial Career" looked wisely at the por-

trait on the cover and said with his solemn smile, "Well, I'll sample it, yes, I'd like to see what Dr. Maurus Jokai has to say for himself." He makes jokes like that: sometimes you'd think he was a bishop.

When we were rid of him I asked Seumas what good was it to give such a book to such a man. "Oh, he'll read it. He'll take notes. Then he'll give it to some fool of a fellow we never could get at; and he'll use my very words, or, this is what he'll say: 'I know no book that helps one more thoroughly to realise the inner meaning'—Oh, Lord! Lord!"

III

By evening I had my dozen Hungarian novels scattered among the boys—all except one. To place that I strolled into the Club. It is a dingy house in a back street. We boast of it, and certainly 'tis macabre enough for anything. Before we got hold of it, some dreadful murders had been committed there; but it would almost have done without the murders—so gruesome is it. In the one small flicker of gas, the most one could get at that period of the war, it looked even dingier than usual. It was thick with shadows; and in these shadows I saw a knot of students huddled

together under that one jet, some of them up on the billiard table. The midmost man—he had glasses on him, with eyebrows raised above the rims—was peering into my book, reading it for them as well as he could. Some of them had their faces towards me, their ears sidelong towards the reader, their eyes fixed on nothing.

"Great fudge! great fudge!" they cried, waving me to join them. The reader raised his eyes a moment, glared at me, moistened his lips and resumed:—

"Hugo Mausmann stepped forward and made a comical gesture, indicating his desire to be heard. Deliberately drawing out his snuff-box, he tapped it with his finger, and proceeded to take a pinch, an action which struck the spectators as so novel, under the circumstances, that they became silent to a man and they permitted the speaker to begin his inexhaustible flow of doggerel. With frequent use of such rhyming catchwords as, 'In freedom's cause I beg you pause,' 'your country's fame, your own good name,' 'our banner bright, our heart's delight,' 'we're brothers all to stand or fall,'—he poured out his jingling verse, concluding in a highly dramatic manner by embracing the hussar officer at his side, in sign of the good fellowship which he described as uniting all classes in the brotherhood of freedom."

They awaited, just stirring a little in their impatience, the fall of the voice at the end (I must say Four Eyes read it well) but then at once, as

if the same thought had come to all of them, the group broke and a great cheer rang out. "Mausmann! Mausmann!—hip! hip!" They leaped from the tables and danced about the room. Their cheering woke the dreary old house, woke the dark old street; and then cracked off into strange phrases cried out in all the accents of Munster: "Our banner bright, green, yellow, white!" "To stand or fall and damn them all!" "Sinn Fein abu!—and high time, too!" "We'll fight again, and not in vain!" "We're not beat yet, don't you forget!" and then a sort of game was struck upon: one man would sing out a phrase, and the others would find its fellow—"To Roisin Dhu!" was cried out and found the answer, "For ever true!" "We'll hunt the Huns"—"With our good guns!" The bedlam was ear-splitting. "We'll fight for them" was shouted several times before it found its answer. "We'll fight for them—" "We'll fight for them . . .!"

"We'll fight for them . . .!" Then someone cried "We will like . . .!" and the whole crowd roared in a frenzy of enthusiam in which they embraced the hussars at their side. They were shouting, they were sputtering, coughing with their backs to the wall; they were laughing and brandishing sticks in the air, and Tubby flourished his Colt. When he mounted the table to make them his speech—I knew it by heart—I left them.

I carried the picture of them with me—the bright frenzy of them there under the flickering gas-jet, in that shabby old room, and I thought of Mausmann's end in the story:—

"What's the matter?"

"Something that never happened to me before —I'm killed!"

IV

I ran into Seumas and told him how they had taken Mausmann to their heart. He was delighted: he looked for results far beyond my kenning. And then, I know not how, we drifted into an argument on the Church's *inner* attitude towards republicanism. We had no facts to go on, and we found this out for each other after some strenuous hours. I also found out (he never would) that we were standing on St. Patrick's bridge, that a cutting wind was blowing up the river, and that Seumas had been coughing the whole time. I persuaded him to go to his lodgings in Sheares street, that he was not needed in the club that night.

V

The next day, my work took me outside the city, and kept me there till the fall of night. It was into a dark squally mass of empty, echoing

streets and squares I made at last, tired of the loneliness of the dead country. I longed for companionship—for Seumas by preference, or Tubby, or even Hillary, and yet it was none of these, but Monica O'Sullivan herself I struck against. I could hardly credit my luck. Of Monica, Seumas used always to speak, to speak quite openly, in the phrase Naisi uses of Deirdre in Mr. Yeats's play, "My Eagle!"—and we never cavilled at it. I checked the phrase on the tip of my tongue, for more than ever her pointed chin was in the air, her nostrils sniffing, her eyes firm and bright with daring. Was ever any other girl so much of a piece?—figure, bearing, voice, spirit? Her background that windy night was one of the myths—the story of Emer, of Fand, of Deirdre. She greeted me in Irish:—

"You look tired?"

"I have been in the country all day (My Eagle!)."

"I could tell you have not been with the boys, you look so dull."

"Thank you (My Eagle)," and I bowed.

"I mean, you need tuning up—I have just parted with them."

"Make allowance (My Eagle)—the old harp——"

She cut me short:—

"Fact is, the club has passed a stunning resolution—even Seumas is satisfied."

"Great fudge! Great fudge!" I thought within me; what I said was:—

"This is Mausmann's doing."

"They go beyond him: he wanted only an amended constitution: we want Liberty—Liberty *sans phrase.*"

"But he helped—Mausmann did."

" 'Twas coming in either case. We'll tell Seumas 'twas Mausmann's doing—'tis all one. It seems that we students, we alone are speaking with the unfettered voice of Munster." She glanced at me, a challenge.

I spoke some dull commonplace. I had helped to pass so many such resolutions in my day that I could not fathom how this one, passed at a meeting of irresponsible students, made such a difference.

"But Seumas says 'tis wonderful, wonderful."

"So 'tis, so 'tis; the students here twenty years ago, we all know . . . they were glad to be mistaken for . . . for the Ascendancy! . . . for the little English . . . the bears, as our Gaelic poets used to call them. They modelled themselves upon Trinity . . . as Trinity models itself on Oxford and Cambridge—reactionaries!" The speech pleased her.

"What Seumas sees in it is this: We have leaped on to the European plane."

I thought of Europe clutched in the grip of war. I said nothing; perhaps I smiled. She spoke on:—

"Everything that happened in European countries struggling to be free, will happen here henceforth, so he says."

I thought of things that had happened, that were always happening in European countries struggling to be free—in Russia, in old Italy, in Poland, in old Holland—and I had nothing to say. But she was merciless:—

"A terrible prospect—but splendid, splendid, the end will be the same!"

"Yes, yes," I said, meaning nothing. (My Eagle! my Eagle! my Eagle!—the look of her, so firm in the squally night, set the word pulsing in my brain.)

She left me; she had to attend a meeting of her friends of the Cumann na mBan, to whom a young doctor was giving a series of lectures in "First Aid."

VI

I then found myself walking very quickly, and for no reason. Everywhere was darkness, and

the boisterous wind had its will of the streets, for they were empty except for the English conscript soldiers who, in groups of five and six, wandered about in silence. Comrades of theirs with machine guns were ranked at important corners, and in the side streets were long lines of huge, dark-clothed policemen ranged against the walls. They hardly spoke at all, and when they did, they spoke in whispers. Their hands were nervously playing about their guns. I took no account of them, I could only rush quickly from place to place, dissatisfied with myself, not daring to think either on what my eagle had said or on herself. Either thought would call up the other: I could not rest on either; I was not at rest, thinking on neither. But I would have sudden inner glimpses of her as she swept off from me, her head in the air, ready for anything —My Eagle!

I was still walking quickly yet aimlessly through the dark, blustery street, when I caught the sound of cheering. Somehow I was glad. I stood still, sniffing the air.

"Young man, you'll do no good by loitering there—the other side of the bridge would be better for you."

A six-foot policeman was frowning at me. I threw a glance at him and made towards the cheering. It was coming nearer, a roar and a

song. About sixty policemen, marching four deep at the head of the procession, went silently and heavily by, in their great belted black coats. Then came a crowd of students in a dense mass, very excited and fierce-looking. They carried a great tricolour; its springtime colours, when caught and bellied in a gust of wind, would shine with unexpected brightness in the odd gleams of the electric lamps. Sharply pointed forward, it seemed to hurry everything along. They were chanting Peter Kearney's wild ballad:—

> "No more our ancient sireland
> Shall shelter the despot or the slave";

and the dash of youth was in their limbs. They were celebrating the passing of their resolution.

One of them fell out; he had been seized with a fit of coughing. I went towards him. I knew it was Seumas. He was bent in two, and yet he would laugh out at me "Great fudge! Great fudge!" I could hardly hear him in the stormy song going by. At last I said:—

"This is a terrible night for you to be out in."

"This is a great night, a brave night, a bonny night—a Russian night." The cough hindered him again.

"Better go home," I said.

"No, no."

"Well, we'll go a little way down here awhile."

I dragged him from the crowd down a little side street. He began to recover, to stand and look back, his nostrils in the air. The side street certainly was very dull and cold and dark. But presently there was wild cheering, then screams, and then a thick crowd of men and girls began to race by us. Stones were flung, and we heard a few shots. I don't know what had happened. I hastened Seumas as fast as I could, but we heard screaming all round us: and then we were alone. Instinctively we drew into a dark doorway, and a moment afterwards the police, with their bayonets far out and their heads down, swept past. They would be holding both ends of the street in a moment.

I rapped at the door behind us.

"Who is it? Who is it?"

"Quick, quick," I said.

VII

A young woman opened it. There was no need to explain; Seumas was limp with coughing, and he was still coughing. His face was all sweaty with it. But he smiled at the girl, and motioned that he was all right.

"Certainly," she said, when I asked permission to stay until the police had gone.

She brought us in to the little living room, where a good fire was burning. Everything was very clean, bright and homely—everything was very still after the wild stampede outside. A cradle stood near the fire, and a very old woman sat beside it on a low stool. She looked up at us with a wistful, curious expression, kept her eyes on us for quite a while, and turned away without a word. Her hair was grey and thin, and her forehead all wrinkles. The young woman's back was towards us; she stood above a kitchen table, on which she was ironing some white linens. We felt the silence of the place and wondered at it—felt it the more perhaps since from far away would come the high-pitched sound of cheering, singing, and cries, with vivid suggestions of trouble in them. And we could see that though both the young and old woman were also attending to the distant tumult, they would not for some reason refer to it. We felt those few silent moments very long: our brains were eager. Seumas at last caught my eye, and turning away nodded towards his left-hand side. There, hanging on the wall in a brown wood frame, hung a cheap enlarged photograph of a soldier. The eyes were just two black spots. I peeped at it; and I caught Seumas smiling at me in his gentle way. "Mother," cried a child's voice from a side room.

The young woman placed her iron on the stand and went into the room. "Yes, yes," she whispered querulously, going from us, and I noticed how scared she looked. The old woman bent towards us, and spoke with eagerness:—

"Speak to her, boys, speak to her—her man is in great danger, they say—(she nodded at the photograph to explain her words) and she's breaking her heart—and all the confusion and crying and running!" She shook her head hopelessly and stopped and began to stir the cradle and to croon above it. We knew it was true—what she had said of the poor "Munster" being in danger. That very morning we had read of their being in the operations around Givenchy.

The young wife not returning, the old woman went on to explain how her man had come to join the army; and there was nothing new in the explanation: it was the old tale of unemployment and the fear of the break-up of the little home. "You may be sure, young man, 'tisn't for love of them he's fighting for them—whisht—she's coming—speak to her, young man." She was looking at Seumas.

It was easy enough to speak to her for, on returning to the room, she brought a little child in her arms, a little girl with gipsy-like eyes, large, brown, startled-looking; she couldn't get her to

sleep, she said. Seumas rose at once and made free with the little one. As he did so I saw the old woman peering at him, at his wasted cheeks, his shrunken frame. And my thoughts went back at once to the swift-moving band of students with their tricolour, how it had flung him aside, a broken soldier, for whom they could not wait. I was looking at him; I looked at the poor scared soldier's wife who was speaking with him. The fright was beginning to lift from her as she went from incident to incident in her husband's long years of dealing with his employers. The old woman still kept peering at Seumas's thin face, thin hands. "I'll make him a cup of tea," she whispered to me at last, as if we had been speaking about him.

It was midnight when we left them. The city was as quiet as a mouse. The streets were empty: even the winds had gone away home. The moon had risen and was now laying silvery tissues on spires and chimney stacks, on corner-stones and plinths, and across the streets there lay vasty shadows, sharp and great and thick, unbroken by any spark or flash or glare of business lamp or street lamp, for all, on account of the wide, free light of heaven, had been put out. Seumas breathed in the serenity of the night:

"I hope any of the lads haven't been hurt," he

said; "and that poor 'Munster'—I hope he hasn't been blown to bits—that photograph doesn't do justice to him, I'm sure."

Like two tourists who have arrived at their journey's end and have nothing in the world to do, we sauntered about the streets, holding our cigarettes daintily in the air and blowing out long and luxurious puffs of fragrant smoke. Occasionally far off we would see a squad of police crossing a stretch of moonlight, making for the barracks. The city was at truce until the following night.

But I knew that Seumas, between his luxurious puffings, was already thinking out some new little scheme to keep the boys from flagging. Yes, that was all his thought; and I envied him his single-mindedness; and yet could not help saying to him as we parted:—

"For God's sake, Seumas, lie up for a few days and put up a few pounds of fat." He looked at me and smiled.

SEUMAS—II

I

Now for Monica O'Sullivan's idea of him:—

Last night, as I listened to a rather good performance of the "Marriage of Figaro," it came to me, Monica O'Sullivan of the Cumann na mBan, that it might be well to write down what I knew of the late Seumas O'Donovan.

No, he was nothing of a musician, he neither sung nor played, and between the incidents of that lovely opera and those of his few years of life there is no affinity, as you will gather, only in its rhythms—in their rhythms, his life and the opera, is there anything similar. As I listened, I first from sheer, quiet happiness, rose above myself, wanted to speak, to touch someone, ever so lightly—and there suddenly was Seumas! I thought my heart would break.

To go back. I was swept into the Republican Movement by the events of Easter Week; it was not possible to resist them. Before that I was much the same as any other young girl in an Irish city. I have a sister in a convent, another married, a brother who is dead: in those years I

used often to think on them, now one, then another. I read whatever novels I could lay hands on. It did not strike me that it was only a very rare one of them that got within the skin of life as Seumas used to say. I hoped to be married some time—and all that sort of thing. But then I met Seumas.

II

It was at one of those wild meetings of protest that followed as soon after the execution of the Republican leaders as the people of Ireland dared to draw their breath. That night we had speech after speech, I remember, one more impassioned than another. You could not be critical when the speakers were young men who had risked everything, and whose only desire was that Banba would one day accept their lives, as she had accepted their leaders'—into whose vacant places they had stepped, though all too young and inexperienced—you could not be critical if sometimes they flung out words that were reckless and even savage. We made no mourning that night: we roared defiance instead, and found relief in the "Soldier's Song"—the Dublin carpenter's song that had been sung in the Post Office in Dublin in a circle of fire. We were conscious that a new

spirit of self-reliance and discipline and faith had come into Irish life. We knew we could trust one another, could trust ourselves. We, too, could suffer.

At a gap, as it seemed, in the proceedings a young man with a brow like a god's but with a face and body worn to the bone, stepped across the platform and whispered to the chairman; and the difficulty must have vanished, for the business went on again triumphantly.

"There's Seumas: his work is bearing fruit," I heard a man's voice beside me. I riveted my eyes on the man called Seumas. I saw him disappear from the platform almost immediately. That was my first glimpse of him.

I was alone, and I had to leave the meeting before it ended. It was a bleak night—although it was the month of May. I paused in the vestibule, reluctant to face it. Then I stepped out.

I saw a figure in an overcoat leaning with its back against the wall; and very melancholy it looked, hunched up there alone in the gloom after the lights and sense of daring within. It sprang suddenly into life, stood in front of me:—

"Are you unwell? I beg your pardon—you're not unwell?"

"Why, no."

"I thought you might have had to come out."

It seemed no other cause than illness could have brought me out. I explained that I had to get home at a reasonable hour, explained also, I couldn't help explaining, how splendid it all was, and how sorry I was at not being able to stay.

"I'm glad you're not unwell, anyhow," he said, lifting his cap, and resuming his position against the wall. At once he looked again like one of those night watchmen you sometimes come on in the small hours, who look to be a portion of the warehouse they protect.

I could not forget him—his curious attitude of loneliness there in the darkness, cold and buttoned up, aloof from the wild life and reckless spirit within the building. How he had sprung at me!—all life and gentle earnestness and—why should I not write it?—charm!

III

I was not long in the movement before I knew how true was the description I had heard of him. He pulled a hundred strings, yet those whom I met would make excuses for his present slackness! I should have seen him in the dull years before the Rising, when it seemed that the language revival must fail. It was in those years I should

have known Seumas! How he slaved at the ancient tongue himself, delving into its literature, and in the light of that literature re-examining the historians, only to find them colossal dunderheads; how he would gather in crowd after crowd of boys and girls to learn that language, only to find them drift away again into the unheeding mob! Then he had to do so much else: rents for the club rooms had to be paid, meetings to be organised, papers to be squared, politicians to be argued with, old priests to be mollified. He would write long controversial letters to the papers, over most respectable-sounding names, proving the value of the Gaelic language as a commercial asset, as an instrument of culture, as a saving grace in a lost world—and he would write long replies to them, just to keep the pot boiling. They all agreed, the letters he wrote over the signature, P. P., on the "Language as the Vehicle of the Faith," were the gem of the collection; they dripped unction from every phrase. They would quote them to me! There was no need for them to tell me of the charm and vivacity with which he had done these things; I had now come to know him, and could picture him in those dull days, when he could find but few to help.

He was frail and delicate; and I soon understood why he kept outside crowded rooms and

meetings: he was husbanding the little strength he had left.

After the Rising there was in Ireland, as everyone knows, a sense of spiritual exaltation that laughed all the wisdom of the world to scorn. As Seumas put it to me: the soul of Ireland had been more deeply influenced through the hundred men who had died for her in Dublin than the soul of England through the hundreds of thousands who had died for her in France. And he would add: In the world of the spirit there is no such thing as length and breadth; it is not numbers that count, not volume. But I pointed out to him then, and he complimented me on my insight, that the deaths in Dublin had evoked the memory of all the countless tragedies that had taken place in the long drawn-out fight between England and Ireland. Through them the past had become alive, visible to us all. The warriors of old—the O'Neills, the O'Donnells, the O'Sullivans—they rode the land again, and Tone and Emmet were speaking in every ear, and with them, the nameless dead that had fought and died in the same fight. So that volume does count (I would say), but he would answer: No, it is intensity only that counts—intensity alone can raise vision. Vision!—the land was swept with it—our lives were dazzled: we lived nobler.

Seumas was, of course, the embodiment of this

spirit of exaltation. Words poured from him—joyous words. Ireland was safe: her soul was the same old priceless soul: no wealth could purchase it: no power break it. And since everybody had begun to learn Irish, it seemed that everybody had at last come to know all this. "Wait," Seumas would say, "till they all have read Keating and David Brudair and Pierce Ferriter and Sean Clarach—then, our governors, if we still have governors, we can break them like that"—and he would break a match in his fingers.

Suddenly, all in one day, scores of the young men were arrested. Squads of police and soldiers, armed to the teeth, yet nervous-looking for all that, swept into the workshops, into the drapery stores, and brought out quite young-looking lads with them from bench and counter. They were not even given time to get on a coat or overcoat. We saw them being marched in couples or singly through the streets to the gaol—bright young lads, with their teeth set and their heads held at the highest, shining with pride; they, too, had been deemed worthy. Banba had accepted them!

Seumas was not arrested. Lily Hegarty and I came on him that evening: he was gliding along swiftly, furtively, looking very depressed. We ran to him.

"How's this?" Lily burst out, "not arrested; oh, Seumas!"

His spirit failed him for a moment. He had to pull himself together. "Oisin i ndiaidh na Feinne" (Oisin in the wake of the Fenians) he said, with a shrug of the shoulders.

There was no explanation for it. Ned O'Brien had been arrested—poor Ned! Tubby had been arrested, amid great cheering. (What will he do for his bottle of stout!) Hillary had shown fight—who would have expected it? They had all been arrested. The gaol was thronged. They could now be heard singing their rebelly songs. They had turned the place upside down. "I wouldn't mind," he said, "but I have been shadowed since Christmas!"

We knew this: we had seen the detectives following him, waiting in doorways while he, innocently enough, went into a shop to buy cigarettes. We had often shadowed them, just for sport. And here he was still at large! We could understand how desolate the city had become for him. But we joked him:—

"You'll never get over this," Lily said.

He could make no answer. We saw that he would prefer his own company to ours. We left him.

But Lily said, when we had gone a little way:—

"Poor Seumas, he'll soon be arrested—quite

suddenly, and there'll be no release," and then she said a line of some old Irish poem which I did not understand.

IV

That night I leaped from my sleep right out on the floor, right over to the window—not quite awake. "Yes, yes," I was saying, like a fool. I thrust my head out and got a handful of gravel in my eyes:—

"What is it? What is it?"

"Whisper, he's arrested, Seumas."

It was Lily's voice. I almost fell with fear. It couldn't be that he was dead. "Quite suddenly," she had said to me that evening, words that were in my mind last thing and I lying sleepless in bed.

"Lily," I said, and I tried to keep my voice steady, "is he with the others?"

"Yes," she whispered up to me, "going in his own door they pounced on him—a full dozen of them; they must have thought him a desperate character."

"Wait a moment; I'll be down to you."

"No, no; don't come down; we're going off. You and I, we're told off to see after his food in the morning. I'll call you up at half-past six."

They went off, the two of them—I had never asked who the second was. I got swiftly into my bed, trembling from head to foot, my teeth chattering. I clenched my fists, trying to control myself. A thousand thoughts swept upon me. I saw prison walls, cold flags, iron bars—and Seumas—a poor thing of skin and bones, angular, very pale—with great eyes. And I here . . . hugging myself into warmth! . . .

.

There was great excitement in the morning while we prepared the food—which we knew we would be allowed to carry in to the prisoners.

Unlike the other girls who, longer in the Cumann na mBan than we, were quite familiar with the ways of the gaol, we went through the early, quiet, wide-open streets with swiftness and heightened colour. We spoke in whispers. But I did not speak of what my thoughts overnight had been. As ladies of the Cumann na mBan our part was to be cool, business-like and brave. We swung up the Western road.

"Seumas!" cried Lily, without warning, clutching my arm.

There he was bearing down upon us, his wan and fleeting smile showing that he had seen us first. The collar of his coat was turned up about his throat, and he looked very seedy, as if he had

not removed his clothes or slept during the night. His face was grey, and when he spoke, his voice was only a thin, hard whisper. His fingers played about his coat collar, keeping the warmth of it to his throat.

We guessed what had happened before he spoke.

"Rejected!" he said, and shut his lips.

Lily had the good sense to say:—

"Happy man," and she rattled on quite quickly, and I thanked her in my heart, for it was long before I could trust myself.

"The old fool of a doctor," he said, shrugging, "wouldn't have me at any price—Good Lord—sure I was worse three years ago than I am now. Lily, you remember, wasn't I?"

She joked about his condition three years ago; in comparison, he was now a Cuchulain.

We swept him into a little favourite restaurant of ours (we had to knock the good woman up) and did our best to rally him into good humour while we spread our luxurious wares (luxurious for war times) before him on the table. But it was long before we succeeded; and even then the gloom would suddenly fall again on him. He washed his face; and meanwhile, outside, the streets were waking up: cars and waggons were passing, trambells were clanging and crowds were hurrying by. The sun was warm.

"Look here," he said at last, "rise up now and we'll have a long walk in the fields."

And so we had, my God! my God!

V

Four days after this, Seumas went to bed at the end of a long and busy day; and in the middle of the night something happened to him, as Mausmann said, that had never happened to him before. I can now think that that way was perhaps the best.

VI

Thus ends Monica O'Sullivan's account of Seumas O'Donovan. She took it to Hillary—Hillary of all men in the world! He is a dandy, and, like all dandies, lacks sensibility. Yet it was to him she took it. Perhaps she was testing it. He brought it to me.

"She wanted to know would it do for our paper."

"What did you say to her?"

"I said I thought it too feminine, too hectic."

"Not too intimate?"

He glanced at me sharply.

"She got mad with me, so I said, to show her what was wrong with it, 'One would think you were engaged to him!' "

"And she?"

"She nearly bit me. 'Thanks!' she said, and swept off with herself. You'd better give it back to her: I know she forgot to take it, and then wouldn't come back for it when she remembered what she had done."

"I'll manage it," I said. And as I handled it I remembered how I had seen her at the Opera House looking at the "Marriage of Figaro." She was alone, wrapped up in herself, unconscious of all others, like a girl in the arms of the man she loves. Coming out we almost touched shoulders; I had almost smiled upon her, almost spoken when I caught a view of her full face: she had not yet awakened! I made my way to my cold and shabby lodgings. I had seen my eagle with her eyes dimmed, with her wings broken, tamed—a thing it was not given to any living man to do—no, nor to the might of England!

THE AHERNS

THE AHERNS

I

BECAUSE I knew no house in that country (we had not then opened it up; now we have no less than three strong companies of Volunteers there —fine fellows), I took my chance in the little hotel. It was the usual kind of hotel one finds in a place that has neither charm nor business of its own—just a public-house, with a few stuffy little bedrooms. For whole months at a time it would doubtless forget that it was a hotel at all. Then some old-time angler would alight on it, or a commercial traveller, thinking he had discovered a virgin land and would work it, or some sort of official from Dublin; for some weeks after the passage of one of these it would still wear somehow the flaunt of a hotel, but mostly it was just a public-house by the side of a road in a grazing district, somnolent in the summer and almost forgotten in the winter—shuttered the whole day long, its door closed out.

Except for a middle-aged man named Harley —an angler, with a pursed-out, gloomy, silent mouth, I had the house to myself. I was in bed before he had come down from the lake in the

hills: I hoped to be far on my road before he would rise in the morning, and I therefore saw no use in deepening our half-hour's acquaintanceship. I remember I did hear him come in, I did hear the corks popping in the silent night. But I had fallen again to sleep when, all confused for a moment, I heard the sudden rush of a motor. Its speed was so great that I felt sure of its passing when, without a voice in the night, I heard it swerve towards the house and stop up, its stifled energy setting my room quivering. Then there were voices enough, quick, low, hard, certain of themselves. I heard the rattle of guns, footsteps noisily making up the stairs, and the publican's voice wailing out, "It's not fair of ye, gentlemen, it's not fair at all." I was had! I felt a sort of disgust, of sickness; the swiftness of the capture, the ease of it, staggered me. I had not even left my bed; I had not even thought of flight.

They were tapping, peremptorily, at poor Harley's door. They were turning the handle, walking in to him—bayonets and all! They were now at my door. It was flung in, a flash of light sweeping walls and ceiling.

In my sleep, my left elbow raised itself to keep out the dazzle of their lanterns, and I grumbled thickly. Voices were whispering. I knew the

landlord pushed them aside. "Gentlemen, gentlemen, can't ye see he's not the man ye're after."

I growled again, puffing out my lips. "You mustn't speak," I heard. It was the District Inspector's voice, I could tell that.

" 'Twas four to one, damn and blast your soul," I rapped out, up in their very faces.

"Can't ye see? 'Tis a farmer's son he is, was at the Junction—where else? and lost his money."

They shook me.

"Your name, what's your name?"

"It has nothing to do with it—you'll hand over the money or . . ." and without putting a tooth in them I flung a handful of terrible words up in their very mouths.

"By damn," said the landlord, " 'tis how he won; 'twas whiskey he was drinking, too, all I had." He chuckled. I felt him by me.

"Waking or sleeping, 'twould be all the same; 'tis little ye'd get from him—wake up, sonny," he urged. But he gave my arm a sharp little nip the moment he said it. I was too drunk to wake, my head went from side to side on the pillow, like a child's head of a hot summer's night. They were whispering. "Wake up, sonny," he said again. I could hear Harley's voice timidly calling him. "I'm coming, I'm coming, sir." He nipped my arm again.

I felt him going. What would happen next? "I don't believe 'tis him," I heard. I raised at once a long rigmarole; there was neither sense nor meaning in it, but I kept it up; and I would repeat the one sentence six times running without the slightest pause at the endings. And while I was in it—that outburst of speech—I felt the room grow calm and cool and silent around me. They had stolen away.

After all, it was not I that they were seeking. It was Killeenan; they had tracked him right from Dublin to this countryside and then lost him, from their very hands, as it were. But there was a voice among those whisperers around my bed, and I had had dealings with that voice already; I had heard it giving evidence against me at a courtmartial in Cork; it had got me condemned to three years' imprisonment—not one month of which I had served. Sergeant Naylor would, I think, be quite content with me as a capture that rich night in autumn: I should anyhow, be far better than no one.

II

A curious thing happened when they were gone. I was sitting up in the bed, listening to their car getting off into the hills like a swift wind, when

the landlord slipped into my room, softly turning the lock on the door behind him. As quietly again, he lit the candle, drew the one chair to my bed and sat on it, looking at me with a strange smile. In this deliberation I could see he was trying to hide his high-strung nervousness.

"Do you know me?" I asked him.

"No," he said; "but I knew what you were the moment you came in the door."

I was surprised; he had not by the slightest look or word let me understand that he knew my business.

"How did you know what I was?"

He smiled again, lifted himself, and gave his head the slightest little toss. I knew it at once; but must own that I had never observed it till then. Our lads use it at the courtsmartial when, asked if they have anything to say, they reply, as in a formula, "I want to say that I haven't a dog's respect for this court or its findings." I had never observed it till then, as I say, and I was quite unaware that it could be observed in me in my ordinary moments—observed, moreover, by a country publican! He was smiling with a certain shyness in his eyes. I held my hand out to him.

"I'm thankful to you," I said.

"Didn't we do it well, better than if we were

after planning it out beforehand?" His look was all eagerness.

"Far better," was all I could say.

"I don't know how I did it. I was never any use at deceiving people, let alone the likes of them; something kept me up. . . ." His voice suddenly weakened, his fingers went trailing weakly across his forehead. I saw sweat standing on it. He was turning white. I leaped from the bed.

"Hold up! 'Tis nothing, 'tis nothing."

He hadn't a word in him. I thought there might be some whiskey in Harley's room. I made for it, candle in hand. He had just got into bed for the second time. I laid my hand on a little flask. "The old man is not well; he's after fainting. They frightened him."

To give him his due he wanted to come with me; but I would not allow him.

"I'm getting old, I suppose," said the publican, when the weakness had passed. "A man should be able to stand more than that—these times," he added, with that quaint shy smile of his.

I put my landlord to bed—(there was no one else in the house but the three of us)—and I left him very proud and happy at having saved me from my enemies.

" 'Twould be frightful if they nabbed you under my roof," he said.

III

I am sure I would have slept all right if it were not for this second disturbance. I remained sitting up in my bed, smoking cigarette after cigarette; and it came to me, I do not know how, that Sergeant Naylor would recollect having seen my face before, might even recollect when and where; and in two minutes I was dressing myself with quick fingers.

I slipped silently down the stairs, and I remember noticing the stuffy smell in the shop, and wondering how it could be as stuffy as that in such an open, windy country. I slipped the bolts—there were four of them—turned the key in the lock, and very quietly rolled my bicycle from the door in the stillness of the misty dawn. I crept softly forward. Down came the gable window.

"Young man, I say, young man, where are you going?"

"Sh!—sh!" I breathed at him, "'tis better for me to go. They'll come back." I watched his white hair sticking out in tufts around his head. There was an innocence in his look that made me think of a woman's face. The world and its hard wisdom, for some reason, had passed him by.

"But you'll have something before you'll start?"

"No, no; 'tis better not. I know where to go. I'll have a good breakfast, I'll warrant you."

"You will, you will." These were not the words he would say, I felt.

"You'll be welcome here any time, night or day. Ye're suffering ye'r own share, running like the poor hare and the dogs upon ye," he immediately added.

The chilly dawn was around me and its great stillness.

"There are others suffering more—the men in English prisons," I answered; and, having said it, I was just mounting when two lines of Sean Clarach's came into my mind, and I flung up my head and chanted them to the white old head in the window:—

"Is iomdha mac dilis dibeartha uaim,
Is a Chriost, nach truagh me 'na n-easbaidhe."—

"The same old story?" I said, with a sudden bitterness, still speaking in Irish.

"I don't understand ye," he said, in a sort of wail, "but it's great to hear ye speaking that language; it reminds me of them that's gone—great men! great men!"

I waved a hand, and left him there, staring after me in the silent morning.

IV

About ten miles off was a country I knew when a boy, I had often spent vacations in it. As I rode and rode, Sean Clarach's earnest words gradually went from my mind, and the beautiful autumn morning began to wrap me about with quiet pleasure. And I began to think of the farmer's son I had known in the old days in this place towards which I was making: we had fished its streams together for long days, and ridden the one horse to the little town on messages. And the thought of him, so gentle he always was, fitted into my mood, and still further quieted it, enriched it, too—those old days had been so sweet and homely, and the later days so full of anxiety and rush and uncertainty. I swept round a corner which was shadowy with trees, and then dismounted; nothing else could I have done; there on the hillside before me was my friend's house —Gregory Ahern's house.

I told myself he must now be a man, but I could picture him only as a boy. These were *our* fields. I looked all over them, one after another. As with all Ireland the place had improved very much—sheds had been added, barns had begun to cluster about the house, and a screen of larch had been planted against the north-east. It was

so prosperous-looking that I had some slight fear that it might have passed into other hands. At last, I wheeled my bicycle up the bohereen and through the farmyard. The house door was open. An old man greeted me: an oblique rectangle of sharp sunlight fell on the floor, reaching to his feet.

"'Tis," he said; "you're at the right house."

"And you," I said, "are Humphrey Ahern."

"The same," he said, cautiously.

"You don't know me?"

He raised his eyes and kept them fixed on me.

"Pardon me," he said, with an easy courtesy that brought vividly back to me the boy Gregory I had known in the old days; there was something in him that, even then, I used to wonder at, not able to name it.

"Pardon me," he blinked at me, "the rheumatism has me destroyed. I can't rise, and I cannot see with the sun." He made an effort to rise.

"It's fifteen years since I was last in this place," I said, coming close to him, "your son, Gregory, would know me."

"If he knew you then, he won't deny you now." I thought there was a touch of meaning in his words: had I been tossing my head in the air, I wondered?

"Gregory, and all of them, are in the sheds

with the cows; they'll be here in a moment; rest yourself."

V

The womenfolk came in first. They had no difficulty in recalling me: they asked after my people. Then Gregory came—my old friend—only now six feet in height, big of bone, keen-eyed, a little jerky in movement. His voice was indistinct, his whole bearing had that excessive gentleness that is so common in Munster. His diffidence almost prevented speech. After some time:—

"I read your book," he said. "I have it inside," he nodded towards the little parlour.

I was surprised. My little book of poems had not, I had very good reason to know, voyaged far beyond my friends in Dublin.

"And you were in the Rising, and in Frongoch; I was going to write to you. . . . I didn't. . . ."

He glanced shyly at me: his eyes fell. I had reddened a little. The fact is I had never thought of him for years and years! His people were staring at me. They evidently had as yet never met anyone who had gone through that terrible week in Dublin or slept in prisons. And he, surely, had kept all this to himself. He had enshrined me! I could see it; and I stumbled in

my speech, as a consequence, fearing that the least hint of the Dublin literary man or the hero of many prisons would break from me. I tried to keep my head steady, as one does for a photographer. His people had become more than polite: the old man was examining me with steady eyes and pursed lips, thinking his thoughts.

At our meal of home-made cake, eggs and tea, with great shyness Gregory said: "I read an article you wrote in 'The Rebel'; it was called 'When the gods arrive, the half-gods go'—I thought it good—perhaps I have no right——" I checked him. Other articles, too, wayside things, he recalled; he had treasured them for my sake. I feared he would quote them, repeat them!

"You should have written to me," I said.

"Gregory isn't the boy to do a thing like that," his aunt broke in, smiling with quiet eyes. He gave a little shrug, and stood upright, staring through the open door.

I couldn't place him, my mind couldn't cover his with any confidence; I had met that type of Munsterman before, had discovered unexpected depths in them—a grit that is not blatant. It has often failed us of the Volunteers to make drill sergeants out of them; but they may keep a whole countryside up to the mark. They go to America, to England, to Glasgow and keep labour politics red hot! I tremble before them.

And Gregory was, I could see, even among the type quite exceptional: his own people had even noticed it. I was not at ease, the more so on account of that head-toss the publican had discovered in me. I knew I had lately developed, in my flying from place to place, from company to company, something of the soldier of fortune —indeed we, all of us, put on the soldier of fortune a little too often, sometimes as a mask, sometimes for the sport of the thing. I would redden with shame if now the least hint of that hail-fellow-well-met boisterousness came to the top. Gregory's type shrink before such loudness, abashed, and yet deeply scornful. And perhaps it was to avoid any such display that I began to speak of my escape from the District Inspector— an incident where my part was not heroic. I stopped suddenly—they were examining me with such earnest eyes. "Oh, but there was no danger, no danger at all. They wouldn't have shot me! At the worst it might have meant three years. . . ."

"But if you resisted?"

"But I wouldn't——"

"'Tis the publican we're thinking of," said Gregory's father.

"How?" I said.

"He didn't betray you?"

I was glad to speak of the publican's part, of

how he had helped me, as with the surety of instinct. I told of my leaving him, of my thankfulness. They lifted up, looking at one another.

"He's an uncle of Gregory's," the old man shook his head at his son.

"Your brother?" I said.

"The same," he replied quietly.

"'Tis in the blood," I whispered, under my breath.

The next moment I was sorry I had told them all this. I was now not only a man on his keeping, but one almost within the clutches of his pursuers. Already I could see them glancing through the windows: a labouring boy, who had been listening, rose up and casually strolled through the door to the gate of the farmyard, stood there a moment looking east, looking west, as if sniffing the air. Coming back he threw himself along the settle. "He's another Ahern," I said to myself.

Gregory himself had fallen into an unbroken silence. Once or twice I caught him glancing at me, and I would question myself whether I had bragged or spoken cheaply or tossed my head. How much easier it is to face the hot little eyes of the martinets who preside at the courtsmartial than it is to meet those questioning eyes where admiration wrestles with old love!

VI

I slept with Gregory that night. Even when we were alone, I sitting on his bed, he smoking the cigarette I had given him, I couldn't win him from his reserve. I got in first. His voice changing a little, he jerked out: "Are you sure there's no danger? Couldn't we mount guard? Jack and myself; 'twould be only a couple of hours each. He'll be glad to do so; I know him."

I laughed.

"You need to knock about a bit."

"Everyone says that," he jerked his head, half-piteously, half-humorously.

I do not know how many hours I had slept when I awoke quietly from a pleasant sleep. As one will in a strange room, I had to look for the window. There, with a start, I saw Gregory with his head thrust out into the air!

"Gregory! For the love of heaven, what are you doing there?"

"Nothing, nothing, I couldn't sleep. I fancied I heard people prowling."

"Have sense, boy, have sense!"

"Everything is quiet," he said coming from the window.

"I declare," I said, "'tis I will have to mount guard over you."

"I really thought I heard something . . . only for that——"

"If you rise again I'll go out and sleep in the shed—I'd have more peace and quietness."

"But supposing you were caught here in our house."

"Lord! The Aherns would never recover from the shame of it!"

He laughed.

"We're not used to it."

"What?" I said.

"Having people like you with us—felons—rebels. . . . I suppose I'd make a bad soldier?"

A bad soldier! He was like a young colt that would tremble and dance about the field—but once in the race!

The next time I woke 'twas with the sweat standing on my brow. I was being hanged, but for all that they could not stifle my voice. Hundreds of them were there before me, their faces white and distorted with passion—moving, drawing close to me, vanishing. Everything was in movement; and it was my voice that had caused it. I was making a speech such as had never been made before on the scaffold—flinging out taunts to them that made them squirm and vanish from my eyes! And all the time I was

being stifled. . . . When I awoke Gregory's long, and, truth to tell, strong and bony arm was fiercely around my neck. You might see a wooden horse so grasped in the arm of a sleeping child!

Disengaging his arm, though I did so with all gentleness, he almost awoke. "What! what!" he murmured, and then a crowd of little words ran from him. But he was fast in his sleep. I breathed easily: I could not bear that he should know he had gripped me like that. I do not know what he was dreaming of; but I am sure of one thing, however; whatever it was it was not he who was playing the leading part in it, making fine speeches, casting heroic scorn on his country's enemies.

.

Time has passed. Yes, he keeps that whole countryside *firm*. He has it in his grip. He will be dragged from his house some night and shot. Or he may, in the end, die in prison of a hunger strike. He will not fail, nor look a fool—the big things being come.

COLONEL MAC GILLICUDDY GOES HOME

COLONEL MAC GILLICUDDY GOES HOME

I

COLONEL MAC GILLICUDDY having been now laid to rest with his Gaelic ancestors in Muckross Abbey, my life, I trust, will soon again begin to flow into its old channels.

.

The memory of the Colonel was becoming, perhaps, the faintest of all my memories—I had not seen him for years and years—when I chanced on this casual little paragraph in my morning paper:—

"The lecture that Colonel Mac Gillicuddy was to give in Wexford Town Hall on 'Cromwell in Wexford' has been prohibited by the authorities."

Then the Colonel is home from India, I thought. He had been wounded at the battle of the Somme, and these wounds, I knew, had unfitted him for further active service; I also knew that he had since then been put in charge of some commissariat department in India, and that he had had to make frequent journeys into the very heart of that vast land, as well as into

Mesopotamia; but beyond this I knew nothing.

Anyway, he was now in Ireland and anxious to lecture in town halls—what had happened to him? To lecture, moreover, on "Cromwell in Wexford," and in Wexford itself—whatever had happened to him?

Other colonels, it is true, had endeavoured to influence opinion in Ireland by lecturing on Irish themes: I myself had heard a colonel lecture on "The Wild Geese" in quite a sympathetic way, and not without some show of learning; but then this was before the Rising in Dublin at Easter, 1916, and the colonel who had done so was by nature a flashy sort of person. Colonel Mac Gillicuddy was different: a silent, brooding sort of man, somewhat of a student, he would not be twenty-four hours in Ireland, his native land, without perceiving that all such methods of influencing Irishmen had become useless, the temper of the people having changed so much.

I found a faint smile beginning to play about my lips. I thought of Mac Gillicuddy himself—a quiet, brooding man with pursed lips and a top-heavy brow—why, his very appearance on the platform would kill the life of any lecture hall in the world, though it were lit with a hundred arc-lamps and festooned with red and white flowers. And then his theme, "Cromwell in Wexford!" What other picture could that bring before the

mind than the slaughter in cold blood by the Cromwellian soldiery of the 300 noble women of the town as they gathered for sanctuary about the stone cross in the market place—surely an extraordinary story on the lips of a British officer! Then the place he had chosen—Wexford itself! And then the time—November, 1919, when the nerves of all Ireland were strained almost to the breaking point! Even as this thought flashed on my mind, I looked through the paper, and there, spread all over it, were stories of arrests, of midnight raids for arms, of prisoners hunger-striking in prison, of shootings, of jailings, of further proclamations of martial law. And I had only to look through the window to see soldiers marching by, armed to the teeth. Of the Colonel's desire to lecture on "Cromwell in Wexford" at such a time, in such a place, I could make nothing, except that something had happened to him.

II

I saw no other mention of that lecture in the papers; a fortnight afterwards, however, I received a short note from him, a fact surprising enough in itself, for during his two years of service in France and since in India—eventful years

—he had not written me even one letter. His note made no apology for all this, neither did he make any inquiry of how these years had passed for me; he simply mentioned, casually it seemed, that he intended staying three weeks longer in Drogheda, *studying on the spot the details of Cromwell's massacre in that town!* How long he had been there already, why he had chosen to delve into these terrible things, and why he should trouble me with them—all this had not crossed his mind, it seemed. His postscript was queerer still: "Have you seen Tate's book on 'Kitchener in Africa'?"

That I noted. I had not heard of such a book, but since Mac himself had served under Kitchener in his African wars, it was likely to be authoritative or he wouldn't have referred me to it. "Tate's 'Kitchener in Africa,'" I wrote in my notebook; and even as I did so a sudden thought jerked, *jerked* the pen from the paper: why, Mac himself must have witnessed some terrible slayings in his time, perhaps even taken a hand in them!

I stood up straight. I no longer smiled: his deadly earnest face, which now was all my vision, forbade it. I had to put away my work and go out into the streets. With a nervous, unrestful stride, that I found impossible to control, I went from hilltop to hilltop, without purpose. Fagged,

yet quieted somewhat in spirit, I reached my lodging again about eight o'clock at night. A postcard stood against the foot of my lamp. I saw that it was Mac's writing. I turned the other side and read these words, "Syed Ameer Khaldoun's book on India also."

India! I could hardly touch the food they put on the table before me. And yet there was nothing like a definite thought in my mind—nothing, only the sense of a far-off background that I was afraid to examine, a background of outrage and blood and horizon-flames tonguing the distant skies; and against this background I would see, all the time, Mac Gillicuddy's brooding face, his top-heavy brow, his pursed lips, his gloomy eyes!

III

I had just settled down of an evening three weeks later on to resume the reading of Tate's ill-advised book on Kitchener in the Soudan when the Colonel was announced. I couldn't take my eyes from his face. He had changed, he had aged, withered, but these changes I might have looked for: he was verging on the middle age, and his life had been a hard one. It was not these changes in him that held me in wonder: it was a certain expression that would come across his face,

chilling the air; and I could feel that he had somehow come on new standards and that he was now judging the world by them: at such times I would halt midway in a sentence, hoping he would not guess the conclusion I had intended! And often, until his whole face looked distorted, his right eyebrow would climb up his forehead, slowly, slowly; and the eye itself, so exposed, would then glare mercilessly into one's very brain! His very appearance disturbed me deeply. He did not speak of India or Egypt; his mind was too full, at the moment, of Drogheda and Wexford. Every detail of Cromwell's (or as he had taken to pronouncing the name, Crom'ell's) massacres in these places he had amassed, sifted, examined and arranged; and I could see that by dint of brooding on them, the terrible scenes, the locale of which he had been so familiarising himself with, had become alive for him, were burning as fiercely before his inner eye as if, like a poet, he had created them out of some central theme of human vileness. Noting how he would linger, involuntarily I was sure, on certain incidents—the killing of infants in the crypts of St. Peter's Church in Drogheda, or the dragging with ropes of an old priest over the cobble stones—noting his rigid air of concentration at these moments, I could feel that the energy of his mind was exactly that

of a poet's in the throes of creation: he was, I was certain, in the midst of passionate confusion, blood was flowing beneath his eyes, steaming, and the odour of it was in his nostrils.

I was really glad when, at two in the morning, he rose to go. I felt I should accompany him, for his ardour of mind was such that he might easily go astray or walk into the river, yet this I could not bring myself to do: he had exhausted my powers. When I shut the door on him I spread myself, dressed as I was, on my bed, forcing myself to think on anything, on everything, except on those wild scenes he had been speaking of like a living witness. . . . I kept my eyes in the clutch of my left hand. . . . After a long spell of this artificially-nurtured coma, as it were, I sprang up suddenly, caught up Tate's book on Kitchener and hurled it into the fire, for an insidious, morbid craving to dip again into his horrors had begun to form itself in my quietening spirit.

IV

The next morning he called to tell me that he was starting at once for Kerry. Cromwell, I gladly recollected had never visited Kerry, and I

remember I said, "'Tis the very place for you —a charming land, wild, romantic, yet gentle, somehow, with mild winds from the sea. Besides, it is the home of the Mac Gillicuddys."

"Yes; I have been told they were a branch of the O'Sullivans."

"That is so."

I was glad to find him in so contained a mood. I expected he would satisfy himself with south Kerry, with Kenmare, or Waterville, or Killarney itself, with its magnificent Macgillicuddy Reeks, the mountain land of his ancestors; but a few days later I had a few lines from him from Ballyferriter, which is in the north. Ballyferriter, he informed me, means the Town of the Ferriters, an old Norman family; and then he added: "In Killarney I visited Cnoc-na-gCaorach (the Hill of the Sheep) where Pierce Ferriter, the warrior poet, the prince who was head of the clan, was hanged, a priest on one side, a bishop on the other, in the time of Cromwell." I could not help muttering, "Still harping on his Cromwell"; but I read on: "From my bedroom window here I can see the whole of Smerwick Harbour; as I write the moon is shining on Dunanore."

Smerwick! Dunanore!—And not another word, only the two names—two names that I had almost forgotten. It was not for nothing

he had gone to Ballyferriter! I could picture his gloomy eyes looking out on the still waters of that haunted bay. I should have gone with him.

The very next morning I had a letter from him which was, to say the least of it, incoherent. It puzzled me. There were lines in it, dashed down I could see, about Sir Walter Raleigh, about Lord Grey—terrible judgments; then there were homely phrases: "Among the Irish-speaking people of this place I find the word for sixpence is *raol,* which surely is the Spanish word *real.*" Then following right on that: "I hear screams in the dead night," and then, "Why does one become sometimes and quite suddenly possessed of a wild gaiety in such spots?" Every sentence in the letter, all but two, was quite intelligible, but as a whole it was without sequence: it was no more to be understood than the broken phrases a soldier, after a day of battle, flings from him in his restless sleep. It happened that I had just been reading Müggc's *Life of Nietzsche,* and I recollected how he tells that the incoherency of the philosopher's letters was the first hint his friends had of his approaching madness. I grew suddenly afraid. I picked up a time-table, and in less than an hour I was journeying towards Dingle, which is the nearest station to Ballyferriter.

V

I found him weakly struggling with his excitement. While eating the plain fare, the home-made bread, that had been put before me, I noticed that his face was becoming more and more haggard: the invisible fingers of a fixed idea were dragging at his cheeks. He could not help rising from the table to survey for the twentieth time the quiet bay outside, and he would scan its distances as anxiously as if he were fearful that an enemy squadron might at any moment round its rocky headlands. He was soon hurrying me along beside its gentle waters. For December it was a day of wondrous mildness, and never were any waters so limpid and beautiful in colour. They fell on the golden sands in just one long wave, that caught the mellow tints of the sky as it rose and broke lazily in foam. To our right, a black stump of a ruined stronghold stood a little way back from the waters. The Colonel pointed it out to me, and told me how it had belonged to the Fitzgeralds, when they were over-lords of all this land, and how one of them, when nearing his end, had asked to be raised up so that his last vision might be the waters of his beloved bay. The

Colonel spoke in a wistful tone, and I began to hope that this quiet country of St. Brendan and many another life-forsaking hermit—so far from the turmoil of the world, might again win him to peacefulness. But the next moment, standing where San Josepho's Spaniards, three hundred years ago, had made their fight, he was, with an edge on his voice, pointing out to me the traces of the fort they had thrown up, and was showing me where Raleigh butchered the whole 800 of them to death, they having first surrendered to him their arms. Feeling that edge on his voice, I drew him unsuspectingly from the spot, and kept him pacing by the lisping and breaking waters almost till midnight, hoping that by first tiring out his body the great peace of the wide moonlight night might the more surely win upon his spirit.

I had just got into bed with a certain flattering thought that my ruse had not quite failed, when I heard him tapping hurriedly at my door. Before I was half dressed he was in the room.

"Look! Look!" He had flung up my window, his hand was stretched into the night: when I drew to his side I could see it trembling. Beyond it, was all the sweep of the bay, dreamy-looking in the moon, and quiet slopes of shadow were laid upon the hills. But, of course my eyes were fixed on that spit of land where Raleigh had

done his slaughtering, for towards that the trembling moon-white hand, as I instinctively knew, was fiercely stretched.

"Ah, my God! my God!" he was breathing, and I could feel his limbs trembling. "Horrible! horrible! horrible!"

"What? what?" I said.

"The cries, the cries," he whispered. I could, by the sound of his voice, tell that there was no natural moisture left in his mouth; it was scarcely speech that came from him. He was hanging on to me, and his trembling shook me. Could it be possible that he was beholding in vision the murdering of 800 defenceless men? saw it as an artist would—in vivid groupings of destroyer and destroyed?

I peeped at him. His teeth were chattering, and his hands clutched my shoulders heavily, as if his legs were giving way; he was shrinking back from what he was glaring at. Yet the only sounds to be heard from outside were some seafowl quarrelling above a school of sprats (as I took it) in the mouth of the bay—sharp cries or melancholy, long-drawn and wailing. Was it these cries that were playing havoc with him? I felt my own ears greedily gathering them in, I felt myself yielding to them, I found them taking on some strange hurry and wildness. Bah! I shook myself. But he was trying to speak, and I

thought it was the word "Cries" I again heard.

"Rather inadequate," I flung out peevishly, thinking, perhaps, to break the spell that was on him; the cries of the sea birds just then were very far away, and indeed, not unpleasant in the still night. How could anyone mix them up with the wild screaming of a massacre? But I had tugged at some tightened nerve in him. He leaped from me, back into the room, and the heaviness of weakness was gone from him. He was now all nerve and sinew. He was glaring at me:—

"Inadequate! inadequate! That's just it." He spoke as if the problem of his life had been solved.

"Inadequate! Laughable! Laughable, when you think of the horror of it! It is that that makes one reckless in such businesses. Wild, inhuman (how he was glaring at me!)—delighted to give the edge of the sword on a grey pate, or a soft breast, or a child!—'I will make them squeal,' you say, you can't help saying it when the passion of slaughter is upon you, but you . . . *you can't make them squeal—loud enough!* and then, and then . . . my God! my God! Shut it! shut it! The curtains. Those also—Oh! my God! my God!"

He had flung himself on the bed, burying his face in the pillow. I knew he felt himself swooning off, dizzy; and seeing that he was beyond

making any effort to get a grip of himself, I said no word to him, only gripped his limp hand firmly, firmly—there is no other medicine for such a crisis—until, little by little, the terror passed from him.

VI

I was careful not to let him again out of my sight. As the death-still night went on—oh, what a land of holy silence it is!—he won back almost to his own self and tried to force me to my bed, protesting that it was not kind of me to treat him like an invalid. I shook my head, and there I sat until the inevitable reaction had come upon him, and he was sunken into an unrestful sleep.

The night was chilly, and there was no fire in the grate, and, not caring to rouse the household, my only plan was to slip into the room he had left and rifle it of the blankets and wrap myself in them; which done, there I kept vigil over him, like a shepherd in an eastern land. Sometimes the loud scream of a sea-bird would cut through the night, and I would glance at him to see if he stirred to it. But, no. Then the silence would deepen and my thoughts would follow the strong-winged bird over the wide waters. I began to

recollect all that I had ever learned of the massacre Raleigh had made in this lonely land; and the slaughters that have been made by others in this country before and since, connecting one with another; and how it came about I do not know, but suddenly, with firm assurance, it came to me that Mac Gillicuddy was picturing all those terrible scenes in the light of his experiences in Africa and India and Mesopotamia! Certain phrases in his letters, certain words I had heard him use, certain inquiries he had been making of me, began to swarm back on me, one summoning another, and at last I almost shouted out: I have it, I have it!—the fixed idea that is harrying him into madness!

With confidence I bent my eyes on the bed. He was whining, squealing like a young puppy in its first illness; but I didn't mind: I could cure him! Now he was still, quite still, seeming as if he were listening to things far away—that sense of strain, I noticed, never once went from him, asleep or awake.

Then little spasms of terror would cross his white features, which he would try to shake off. Yet still I did not lose confidence that now, understanding his disease, I could make a cure.

Of course we left Ballyferriter the next day. To catch the first train from Dingle we had to leave in the dark of the morning, and dark it was,

the moon having sunken. A curious thing happened: In a wild, lonely place near Lord Ventry's woodlands, groups of silent-moving figures began to pass us on the road. The whole country, as everybody knows, was disturbed at the time by groups of armed men raiding in the nights. I grew timid.

"Who are these?" I whispered to the old driver. "Whisht!" he snarled at me.

"But who are they?" I persisted.

"'Tis little sense ye have, for an Irishman," he said. I then said:—

"Are they Sinn Feiners?"

"How would I know?" he growled at me.

The Colonel had caught the words, "Sinn Feiner," it seemed. He gripped the driver.

"Halt awhile, driver," he said. "I want to see these men; I won't be long." He was just leaping from the car, when the driver, with some magic word he had, set the horse prancing. I caught the Colonel's arm.

"Are you mad?" I said to him.

"Mad!" and he flung his head up; the horse was still rebelliously dancing along the road.

"Yes, mad," the driver shot at him; "them fellows would destroy you, and the likes of them clothes on your back!" The Colonel was still in khaki.

The figures had vanished. We were recklessly rushing along through places where there was not the faintest glimpse of light of any kind upon the road.

VII

When I had him seated in the train I began to think of the remedy I would try. Since he was haunted by the vision of the reverse of the British Empire I would speak of its obverse. After all, one could make out a case for it. Had it not spread Christianity, I would say, into those wild lands, throwing some certain share of its wealth and its choicest children into the work? Then, its glorious pioneers—their gallant fortunes, their fame—might one quote of them:

> "Only the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in the dust!"

Then I would attempt to show what a blessing those vast hinterlands are to a mother-country, how they are as a very sporting jungle for the younger sons who, remaining at home, must gamble away the estates. Lastly, I would speak of the stream of wealth that has been for centuries flowing into England itself from those seemingly inexhaustible sources. Of that one could speak

with confidence. . . . So I would speak to him; but I would not begin yet awhile, for he was sunken into some deep reverie: he had not yet quite shaken off his wild visions of the night.

We stopped at a little place called Emlough, if I remember right, and resuming our journey I made an attempt to speak: but he raised his hand, motioning me to silence. Soon afterwards a crowd of English soldiers, very tired-looking, armed to the teeth, got into our carriage, and I thought I saw the Colonel shudder. To start with a colonel a discussion on the two sides, the glory and the shame of the British Empire in a carriage full of soldiers might lead to the most unimaginable results as things were just then, so I was forced to hold my peace. And these soldiers kept us company until we reached home! I could see that their presence had made Mac Gillicuddy very excited. And there were other incidents as well to play upon him. In Tralee we saw groups of armed policemen lining the main street; presently we saw military motor lorries bringing some Sinn Fein prisoners to trial —young lads, they stood daringly upright in the hooded waggons, with bare steel all round them. We noticed how the people moved quickly through the streets in a sort of gloomy silence, peering into the hooded waggons as they passed in quick succession.

It was dark night when we reached the city. The next day I would make my first attempt to win Mac Gillicuddy from that fixed idea that was ruining his mind.

VIII

We were weary. I threw myself into a deep chair. The Colonel seated himself at the table, opened the evening paper he had bought at the door as we entered, and became engrossed in it, it seemed. Presently he rose. "Pardon," he said carelessly, and went out, the paper still in his hand.

He spoke so calmly, as if by having at last made up his mind on some definite plan, he had crushed his excitement into quiescence, that I thought of questioning him as soon as he returned. But there was no sign of his returning! I went seeking him at once, with a growing agitation in my mind. He was nowhere in the house. Without a moment's delay I was rushing through the streets, sharply peering at all that I met or overtook. And the streets were crowded and uneasy. As in Tralee and Dingle they were swarming with squads of soldiers with their helmets and packs on them; and batches of heavily-coated policemen, with white, strained

faces, went silently and swiftly about whatever business they had on hand. Military motors and military lorries were recklessly tearing through the dimly-lit darkness. And the people seemed hurrying too, and silent.

For fully three hours I dived hither and thither through wide and narrow streets—through squares lit by arc-lamps and through filthy passages where there were no lamps of any kind. In an alley way a poor beggarman was singing; his hair was long and matted, he had a thick, unkempt beard, he wasn't four feet in height, an old overcoat that he was wearing soaked water from the muddy ground. Yet he was singing heartily, and the name, Ireland, was in every line:—

"'Tis Ireland, 'tis beautiful Ireland,
Ireland, the gem of the sea,
Oh, my heart is at home in old Ireland,
And I wish that old Ireland was free."

He had a pair of nigger's bones in his right hand, he flourished them to the rhythm. I don't think I should have noticed him, but in three different places I came on him that night. I began to think in the end that maybe he was not a beggarman at all.

Exhausted, I again reached my lodgings in the market square; how wide, free and airy it was

after the narrow streets! The moon held half of it in a white still light, the other half was black with shadow, in which a few odd lamp-lit windows glimmered very warm and mellow, contrasting with the wan moonlight.

"My friend has not returned?"

"No, sir; there is no trace of him. Johnny, here, saw him going out."

"Well, send in whatever you have; I'm fainting."

"Yes, sir; and there's the paper."

I had little mind for it, but as it lay there on the table, I saw in scare head-lines:—

"Massacre at Amritsar!
2,000 Indians Shot Down by the English.
500 Killed Outright."

There was little other information except the name, General Dyer. I must confess I did not cast one thought on those murdered Indians, nor on their murderers; my one thought was Mac Gillicuddy. This was the news he had been so intent upon; it was this dreadful story, come so pat upon its hour, that had sent him out—and he had gone so calmly out! Though the paper trembled in my hand, my weariness had fallen from me. I was sweaty and cold, yet anxious to be up and doing; the shock those three lines of print had given me had called out those reserves of

spirit that in such moments so dominate the mere body.

"I must find him," I said. I swallowed some cups of tea, one after another, and rose up to make again for the streets.

At that moment I heard steps on the stairs, and in flung Mac Gillicuddy himself, quickly and nervously! An appalling wistfulness was in his features, his eyes were wide and pale, his lips weak. He threw himself into a deep chair and buried his head in his hands. And these hands, too, seemed so pale, long-fingered, sweaty!

"What has happened?" I said.

Without removing his hands from his face he shook his head. He wouldn't speak.

Meanwhile, outside, the whole city seemed to have gone into riot; that it was in train for it I had noticed in my rushing through it. The tramp, tramp of soldiers went by, the rattling of their horses and waggons. Far away a rebelly song was being sung firmly and defiantly. Suddenly we heard cries and screams, and hundreds of voices:—

"Release the man, release him!" "Shame on ye, ye——" "Shame!" "Shame!" "Shame!"

I listened to it all, still staring at the broken figure sunken into the chair. Again I heard the cries, "Release him, release him!" and "Let him

go, ye——." And then all the cries, shouts, running, singing, seemed to gather up into one long, loud, triumphant roar. I leaped to the window, I saw a great crowd below, a group of policemen in the centre, buffetted by the people, and a wild, squirming little figure in their grasp—my little ballad-singer, I thought. They were all in the moonlight; but a different crowd were surging into the square from a far-off angle, singing; and it was their coming that had caused the cheering. The little prisoner squirmed more than ever, and at last the policemen had to let him go. They then formed up into a dense mass, and began to fight their way back towards the opening they had come from. All was confusion; stones began to fly through the air, glass was broken. Little knots of people stood still, clutching one another, and others began to whirl around the knots, like currents in a rock-strewn river. Presently, other shouts, yells and screams, screams of terror, arose in another corner of the square; very shrill, they were, very high-pitched; and at once the whole crowd broke into a wild stampede: an armoured car had entered from a side street at a tearing rate and was encircling the square; the place emptied itself in a flick of time, lay again open to the moonlight and to the broad shadows. Still the car tore around it, circling it three

times. At last it stood still. At its first coming Mac Gillicuddy had dragged himself wearily to my side; together we had watched its antics; now we were staring speechless at it, as it stood there, throbbing in the moonlight in a pool of shadow; it seemed to look around to see where next it should make a spring. We saw two young heads rise above it. They laughed. They spoke. If Mac Gillicuddy caught the words, I did not; but he raced from the room as if struck by a whip. I leaped after him. I flew down the stairs. He banged through the glass doors. I opened them. I saw him making headlong for the car. The two heads turned towards him. Then down they went. He leaped at the car, crying out—I know not what. A succession of revolver shots rang out, seemed to fly everywhere. Then the car blew a cloud of smoke and moved. He was all limbs, right in front of it. I could see nothing for a moment—only a lifting cloud. Then in, beneath, that little cloud I saw a figure crawling slowly on all fours, like a beast, stupidly, heavily—a most ridiculous posture. It only went a little way, when down it flopped, kissing the ground. And all the time the car circled the square. It swerved to escape the bundle that now lay in its path, and then shot swiftly out of sight by the side street it had entered from. There, in the

middle of the moonlight, lay Mac Gillicuddy, dead, with his secrets.

.

It seems he had gone to the Sinn Fein headquarters and laid certain plans before them for the wrecking of the British Empire, offering his services in the carrying out of them. They would not listen to him. It was then he returned to me, a man who had suddenly given way to despair.

He sleeps in Muckross Abbey. Hundreds of other Mac Gillicuddys—soldiers also—sleep there, too. Considering the story of his life, the manner of his swift death, it is curious to try to imagine how those old Gaelic warriors received him, their kinsman. With aloofness? or with kindly welcome?

I, who knew him so well, I can picture him only as a poor abashed and tongue-tied figure, shrinking away from their hard gazing, their fierce brows. May he rest in peace.

AN UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

AN UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

I

I WOULD dare it—and my heart leaped and sang as soon as I had spoken. God knows, I was drained of spirit. If those young men of that countryside, those young Republicans, who were ready to dare all, to take five years in jail without making any defence, whose brothers had died that the infant Republic might be set up, who would die themselves to maintain it—if those young men I was finding flat, shallow, dull, commonplace! in myself was the fault, as I told myself ten times a day. Every morning now I arose unfit for the day's work, (I was organising the Intelligence Department of the Republican Volunteer Army in that eastern part of County Cork), and during the actual conferences I would find my mind wandering, and I would find the men looking at me shrewdly, perplexed at my casual way of doing the thing; and yet I could not, try as I might, win back to my old energy; I had grown suddenly stale —that was all that was to be said.

And then suddenly, and by the merest chance, I heard that Eibhlin Ni Chartha, or Eileen Mac-

Carthy, if you find it easier to remember that form of her name, was in Knockacashlawn, which is not very far from Mogeela, which is itself on the railway—that she would be there for some weeks with some relatives of hers, and that her coming there had already made a difference. A difference? —surely, surely! I had no doubt at all I would find a very efficient Cumann na mBan in the place, ready for all emergencies; I would find them learning Irish, learning First Aid, learning how to cook on an open fire, above all, I would find them learning—Eibhlin herself! Yes, I would go to her.

There would be no need to explain anything. Owing to my way of living these few years past, running from place to place, seldom daring to sleep at home, we had never "fixed matters up," as people say, but I was confidently certain that Eibhlin would become one day my wife, and this I knew that she knew just as well as I. In the wells of her spirit I would bathe. We would laugh, we would cycle, we would dance the rinnce fada in the farm kitchens, we would play cards with the labourers, we would borrow the farmers' hunters and make the frosty roads ring beneath our hoofs, we would go shooting in the bogs—we would climb the high hills, we would surprise the simple people who were giving us so large-heartedly of their stores, of their pity, of their love.

They would say: "Those Sinn Feiners—look how merry they can be—and they not knowing the night they'll be flung into prison, or maybe shot or hanged!" Then, after five days, or eight, or ten, I would take up my work again, and push ahead with it, rejoicing in those gifts of insight and tact that God had given me. Yes, I would dare all and go to her.

II

This was the risk: the police, as I well knew, had still the thought that I had never left the Mogeela district! I had heard that even still the young men in those parts would stroll lazily and sleepily from their fathers' houses of a morning—with little or nothing to do these wintry days—and find a few policemen disappearing round a corner—policemen who had been peeping in at their windows or listening at their doors and shutters, seeking a strange accent, a strange face, seeking my poor self! For me, there was risk, but as I told myself, for the Republic there was greater risk in my staying where I was, dawdling at the work instead of doing it. So could it be reasoned out, I said, my going to Knockacashlawn; but only little had reason to say to it: I was doing right in going there, reason or no

reason. I knew, I felt deep down in me, that I was doing right!

And the first stage of my journey went well with me. I kept to the up-hill, down-hill, ancient, overgrown by-roads of the pack-horse centuries, some of them nowadays just tracks on a hillside; and I dashed into the railway station at just the right moment to fling myself into a carriage—I knew the lack of a ticket would make no difference—all the men on that part of the line were "ours." They knew me of old. "Thank God! Thank God!" I said, almost aloud, when I found the train moving nicely off, passing the stolid policemen, who, chin in air, quite efficiently surveyed us as we passed, catching sight, perhaps, of a young man, or at least of a large handkerchief wiping the sweaty face and brow of a young man in a third class carriage. Thank God, so much was over, and I had three-quarters of an hour before anything else could happen.

I found myself examining, rather with interest, two old maiden ladies, the only other human souls in the carriage, and I was surprised to find myself doing so; already I was being renewed; or else I could not have given myself up to this quiet contemplation of them. They were dainty old ladies, sisters to all seeming: the piece of purple ribbon in the furs of the one was flesh of the flesh of the piece of purple ribbon in the hat?—bonnet?

—hat? of the other. In equal parts they had shared out their rather ample stock of old-fashioned jewellery—I could match one thing with another. Sisters, yet with a difference, as two blossoms on the one plant may differ. Their heads were turned from me, they were intent on the wintry landscape passing by, so intent that I knew that everyone of all their thoughts was gathered on my poor lone hunted self. The little lady on the left was reserved-looking, long-faced a trifle, almost colourless, her lips too thin, too closely shut. Her sister was pleasanter, more easily read; she was the blossom that had caught the sunshine, the relics of long-faded roses were still in her cheeks, and her eye was lively. The paler lady had no trouble at all in keeping her gaze on the bleak fields running by, but after a hundred little twitchings, ahems, stirrings, the plump little lady suddenly swept her eyes full upon me, at the same time delicately drawing the tip of a very slight little flimsy handkerchief to and fro several times along her still ruddy little lips. She found me, of course, lost in a brown study.

They were both a little birdlike of aspect, they always are!—but this old lady now surveying me, with some surprise, I warrant, was a song bird that would impulsively burst (in her youth, of course) into trills and runs and cadenzas, if only

an unexpected gush of sunbeams fell on her as she walked in the fields, while her sister, I thought to myself, could not do with less than a branch of waxen candles and a little crowd of well-mannered ladies and gentlemen about her before her careful notes would fall—perhaps with unexpected passion—from her rather firm lips. Poor old chits—they had rubbed through the long years, never agreeing in anything, never exactly of the same mind, pertly impossible, often frankly offensive to each other—they could not guess how much one thing they were to me.

I saw now that while I had been riding pell-mell through the bright morning, seemingly reckless, the sense of danger, the need for alertness had been more and more becoming the whole of me, knotting me up, as it were. I remembered how when I had, unapprehended, flung myself into the train and found it begin to move off, I remembered the "Thank God" that had fallen from my lips, and, now so quietly to recall it, I felt myself opening out from that knot of care, opening out, spreading myself as a plant after the night is over, ready to drink in whatever sun and winds there may be abroad. And there before my eyes were this pair of sister-birds—either a puzzle if the other were not by. They were a gift from a quiet old world that had not been mine for a very long time. The pair of them there between me

and the dull wintry landscape on which the colourless dusk was falling, lifting, falling, lifting—they were like an old-fashioned melody—not insistent, not emotional, not headlong, just a gentle singing, a soft rhythm, with a pensive undersong, with little to say except that all roughness and noise and haste and danger were better forgotten for ever and ever. Only once did they speak. The brighter little lady said:—

" 'Tis a very dull evening, very dull."

And the other gravely nodded her head. But I found myself smiling, and saying "Dull!—No! no!—'Tis a sweet old evening—I am winging to my *gradh geal,* to my bright love, though you do not suspect it, nor do you suspect how much more keenly, ardently, passionately I will drink her into me for your sitting here beside me in your withered maidenhood."

III

At the next station in a flutter of colour and laughter and swift, long-gloved, white-gloved hands there broke in upon our quietness two young girls—of whom one was called Mamie and the other Lil—as we were all presently to know. They were richly befurred and wrapped, hidden away almost; for all that, however, one caught

sight of dainty flesh, dainty ribbons, creamy whiteness, linen-whiteness, soft pinks, little bits of flashing jewellery, too, and very bright, frankly-youthful eyes. But it was rather their swift glances, their unhidden excitement, their meaningless yet significant words and phrases that best told what fun they were after. It is a country of big, square-built houses, and quite certainly one of them would be blazing with lights and throbbing with dancing couples this night behind its screen of branchy, silent trees.

Mamie, the younger, could not keep still; and when her fresh, musical voice leaped out upon us every cell of her healthy, warm, exhilarated being was living in it.

"Oh!—I do hope Dickie will not fail us!—He won't? he won't?" She was staring up in the face of her sister, who sat opposite her.

"You can't trust him," a voice far quieter, paler, answered, the lips alone moving.

There was a silence, the bright eyes withdrawn from her sister's face were busy with some vision of their own.

"I know what he'll say . . . Oh!" There was a silvery laugh, running off into a boyish chuckle.

"Yes." The laugh was not answered, only the words.

"He'll say, 'Do you remember that night at Bransby's?' "

A soft look of comprehension lit up the quieter eyes of the taller girl. "Yes," she answered again.

"And I'll say . . . Oh! oh!" She was choking with laughter, lowering her face into all her pink, linen and creamy mantlings.

"You'd never guess what I'll say?"

"Be quiet, Mamie."

"I'll say: 'What night at Bransby's? I was never at——' "

She could not finish for laughing.

" 'Sh. Be quiet. You mustn't. . . . He'd . . ."

"And the stupid! he'll lift up his eyebrows, you know. He'll say, 'Haw!' three times. 'Haw! Haw! Haw!' " She spoke them with an effort at self-mastery, very quietly in Dickie's voice, except the last, which fell into her own.

How my two old birds—oh, they had aged immensely!—were watching, were listening!

"He's stupider than Will, but he's nicer, he's much nicer. I like him much better, I love him!"

Lily's quiet eyes glanced with some touch of shame in them towards the old ladies—had they heard? And Mamie's reckless glance followed, and, at what she saw, Dickie suddenly seemed to fall quite out of her mind. She was frankly examining now one, now the other of the two faded sisters, her thoughts passing quite legibly across

her face. Who are they? Where are they going? What makes her do that? The other is doing it now. Are they cold? Were they there when we come in? Poor old things, you're very queer-looking, though I don't know what's the matter with you. . . . Then quite suddenly she turned from them, and caught up Will and Dickie again. "Yes, for he's not conceited, and Will is, he's as conceited as a poll-parrot. I know; because the night——"

But Lily's dainty shoe stretched out in a little petulant kick, and the other shrugged her shoulders, and swept us all again with a glance full of inquiry: You're not listening? It doesn't matter whether you are or not—not a bit. . . . Then she suddenly leaped from her place and flattened her nose on the window-pane.

We were entering a little sideway station: the train was screaming. She swooped again upon us:—

"Here we are, old Lil! Hurry, girl, hurry!"

She was again at the window, and again she turned to us, this time with a great change in her voice: it was low, hushed with surprise.

"Lil, 'tis . . . John!"

The gentler girl, on hearing the word, stood suddenly upright, and the voice in which she spoke was fuller, richer, than her sister's had been; how could a voice so change!

"'Tisn't? Mamie! Mamie!"

Mamie was again looking at her.

"I'm sure. 'Tis, 'tis, Lil."

"Oh! Mamie——" Then there was a whispering, and both began, nervously, quickly, to gather their wraps and little parcels together.

I opened the door for them. The younger girl leaped down and shook hands with a young man. He swung from her and folded the quieter girl in his arms, passionately and without a word.

I saw that. I stood upright myself, I do not know what gesture I made, nor if I said any words, in Irish or English. I found myself standing, swaying, for the train was again travelling, my hat in one hand, my other hand straying somehow over my head, my forehead. And I knew I was frightening the old ladies.

"Excuse me," I said, huskily. "I got a dizziness, a dizziness."

"If you sit down?"

"Yes." I sat down. I was trembling.

A few moments afterwards I was telling myself that it was time I had put my work from me, when the sight of two lovers, strangers to me, embracing on a country platform, had so played upon me.

It was six months since I had last seen Eileen

MacCarthy; six months full of tragedies, of shooting, of imprisonments since last I had held her in my arms.

I would hold her in my arms this night! A great ecstasy seized me. I felt the train whirling me along—whirling a thing not entirely conscious. It was also whirling along two old maiden ladies. That I knew. But they were far away from me. . . . The rapture passed. They were still here before me. I should love to help them—if only one could!

And then I began to think that the two stages of this journey had been like two movements in a sonata—the first a pensive, quiet movement; the second, a movement far brighter, yet still reminiscent somehow of the first, except for that suddenly swift and passionate close. And as I thought of this I found myself staring at the old ladies, as one might stare at two children who had not yet put their teeth in that fruit we call life—and my lips were moving in silent speech. "But there'll be a third movement—Oh, yes! There'll be a third movement, brighter, swifter, deeper,—it has begun, it has begun. . . ."

And I was already glowing with the thought of it, something was surging within me; this night I would make certain that Eileen MacCarthy would be my wife for ever. These times, these times of terror and partings and jailings and sud-

den deaths were not times for delaying in, and. . . .

Anyway I am glad to remember I had the grace to bid the old ladies good-bye as I leaped from the train.

IV

I rushed for my bicycle. The station, I noted gleefully, was empty of all policemen. I was soon on the dark road riding along. I saw the lighted-up train curve away in the distance, its bright plumes of cloud breaking into fragments; I heard its rhythm begin to merge into the night.

The clouds were gone. The sky was spangled all over with wide-eyed stars: how beautiful among them were the frost-still branchy treetops! I breathed deeply, deeply. I was drinking a cup full of joy in a night of serene and stately beauty.

My two old ladies were still journeying on: now they were chattering, I hoped; how colourless their version of this short journey would be—poor souls, whose eyes had never opened! Mamie and Lily were now whirling and laughing in a swift dance in that lighted-up old square house within its park of solemn trees. I did not envy them. There was room for all. Truly night is a deep womb . . . "deeper than daylight

thought," as the German poet puts it. Soon . . .

"Halt! Who goes there? Halt! Get down . . . we'll fire!" The voice was roaring, I felt my knees weaken, grow cold. "Right. We're right."

A whistle was blown. I heard rifles grounded. I was caught. The policemen at the first railway station were not so unobservant as I had thought.

That night I spent in a lonely cell in Cork jail, pacing it, pacing it, disentangling a hundred thoughts, a hundred anxieties. Gradually the heat went from my brain, and I sat down on the edge of my bed. I tried to reckon what time it was. It was about two o'clock. The silence was appalling. Far away, I heard the scream of a distant train.

A BYE-PRODUCT

A BYE-PRODUCT

I

AMONG the mountaineers of that corner of the Comeraghs there was a sluggishness of feeling not to be found anywhere else in Munster. Perhaps they thought themselves beyond the reach of any law in their secret fastnesses; or it may be that Sean O'Leary's explanation was the true one: they were a slow people by nature, he would say—what were they but the descendants of Raleigh's English folk, of Boyle's English folk, for all the perfect Irish that was their mother-tongue? O'Leary was from the west, was, of course, a Gael of the Gaels—"The O'Learys that were wedded to Ireland," he would quote from Egan O'Rahilly—and was, perhaps, something too hard on the simple people of the east. But at last even this slow people began to stir when, in the autumn of 1918, it seemed quite certain that England would put the Conscription Act in force in Ireland.

II

Nicholas Motherway was tearing at the hunk of wheaten bread like the poor foolish creature

he was. No one had ever seen those flat, unshapely features, those wandering eyes, take on the keenness of intelligence: at best one caught in that empty face only a vague expectancy, a gleam that began to die away before it had half ripened. The mouth was now active, and the strength of the jaws and teeth was plainly seen, but no sooner would the feeding be done with than the lips would droop open again and the whole chin and lower face sag down helplessly. His father, an old man, stared at him with pity, with contempt; and only for the trouble that a year ago had fallen upon himself, indeed there would have been no pity at all in this nightly reckoning of his son. That trouble, that unexpected stroke of paralysis, had left him a shrunken, palsied, grey-faced creature, weak and broken, and now it was only in short moments of forgetfulness that the old thoughts, free and rough, would rise uppermost in his mind and break from him in snarling words.

Voices and footsteps were hurrying to their open door. The son started, rose uncertainly, a scared look wavering in his eyes. His father cried at him angrily:—

"Where would you be going? Sit down, let ye."

The lump sat down awkwardly, timidly.

"Come in, men, come in, let ye."

Sean O'Leary, Sean Wall, a farmer's son named George Hankard, a man named Gumbleton, a few others stepped rather shyly in, filling the doorway, shutting away the flood of dusky, filmy gold that was abroad between the running hilltops and the paling sky.

It was Sean O'Leary came forward; indeed, it was he who had gathered the others from their far-scattered houses.

"'Tis how 'tis, Maurice," he began, "we're after learning that the police are after sending our names and all about us to Dublin, and that to-morrow maybe, or the day after, the military will be coming to drag us from our homes to fight for them, to fight for England, and——"

The old man was looking at them shrewdly; he was always glad when anything came to break in upon his empty, listless days; he raised his hand, with something of command in the gesture.

"And tell me," he said, "isn't England after getting enough already? Every single man that could be coaxed out of this country by lies or love or money to fight for her in this cruel, unchristian war—isn't she after getting them? And tell me, them that are left, wouldn't it be a crime against the Almighty God to force them to fight against their will, men that hate the very name of her?" His hand came flat down on the

deal table and stayed flat on it, his eyes were buried in them.

"That's what we say," O'Leary jerked out in his quick, nervous way; and the others repeated his phrase, or others like it, thinking that the old man's strong flow of words needed at least so much notice from them.

With greater warmth the old man spoke again:—

" 'Twould be a crime and a mighty crime against the Almighty God for England to put the bayonet into a boy's hand and say to him: 'Stab them and slay them and kill them, and slaughter them whether 'tis in your mind to do so or not.' "

He had lifted himself from the chair: the others could see the rickety table, on which his left hand was leaning heavily, trembling to the trembling of his limbs, but all this he had himself forgotten. His eyes, usually so grey and wistful, were burning upon the group, holding them in wonder, for they had had no thought of being received in such a manner.

"That boy of mine, the only one left me, I'd rather see him stretched here on this table, and the habit on him, than fighting for them and making a great stir, maybe—Nicholas!" he cried, turning his head; but the boy had slipped away from the men into the little room where

his bed was, and was now peeping through the loosely-jointed boards at the group his father was dominating, "Nicholas, come hither, let ye," and he turned again to the young men, "they say they're not particular who they take. . . ."

"It don't matter a damn," Sean O'Leary broke in swiftly, "not one of us they'll get, not one. Rich and poor, strong and weak, we're gathering together; and if they'll lay hands on any one of us whatsoever there'll be shots firing on the hills I tell ye, firing at all hours of day and night. . . ."

"And is it now ye're gathering together?"

"This very night we're gathering in the Name of God. And we'll have a meeting in the coom and we'll——"

"The blessing of God on the work—'tis holy."

And so his son, Nicholas Motherway, the poor lump of a fool, went with them. At first he shambled awkwardly behind them, for he feared that they might at any moment break out into mockery of him, as used so often to happen at the turf cuttings, at the threshings; and it was a long time before it crept into his slow brain that all that was over and done with. Little by little, somehow, as they went on across the broad shoulders of the hills from house to house, the crowd growing larger, louder, and more spirited, he found himself becoming more and more one

with them and they with him. . . . It was a night of silvery starshine, large, open and wide, and the great empty spaces of the mountain-land seemed to be waiting, to be waiting for some battle-call to sound on them—that, or the descent of angels in robes of white. . . . The dawn was almost come upon the mountains before Nicholas burst in with unaccustomed noise and vigour on the old man, who had sat at the hearth all night awaiting him. He was full of bubbling, incoherent speech, at the end of which his wondering father was half aware that a dreadful battle had been fought in the coom, that thousands upon thousands of men had been all night tramping across the hills.

III

Nicholas, after some bad blundering, suddenly left the ranks and placed himself side by side with Sean O'Leary himself, who was drilling them. Nobody minded the irregularity: what was he but an idiot? Again and again the group of men in the lonely coom formed "fours," every time more nearly perfect, and still the lump of a man—he was far bigger and heavier than the best of them—although quite young, hesitated about trying it himself.

"Again! again!" he cried out suddenly, and again Sean's voice gave out the command, and again the little squad went through the trick. Then the simpleton clapped his hands with joy, burst out into drivelling laughter, leaped back to his place in the ranks and stood, stiff as the best of them, awaiting the word. This time he did it, and the whole crowd broke into wild and merry cheering.

That night, too, he had a tale for his waiting father.

IV

A few nights afterwards, O'Leary himself did not come to drill them: Lingwood it was that took his place, and Lingwood was not skilful enough to bring them on to anything new nor alert enough to keep them in good trim, so that before half the night was spent they were lying listlessly along the edge of the stream that ran through the levels. It was noisy and swift: its parent hills were not far off, indeed they were looking right down on it, with night beginning to darken and chill their climbing shadows.

Wall was lying lazily along it; his head and shoulders were leant back into the soft foliage of a willow, and his right foot, stretched from

him, was idly toeing a lump of rock that, half sunken in the bank, hung above the stream. Presently, with a sudden splash and gurgle it fell from the soft mould into the waters, the debris discolouring them. When they cleared again, the worn surface of the stone laughed brightly up at them through the turf-coloured stream. Lingwood at once roused himself, knelt, and lifted the stone from the stream's bed. He felt it in his hand, he weighed it; it was just the right stone for throwing from the shoulders.

At midnight Nicholas entered the cabin with a clatter of noise:—

"Eirigh, 'athar," he said, with boldness and pride, "is agamsa ta an sgeal duit"—"Rise, father," he said, "'tis I that have the story for you."

And he would scarcely give him time to rise.

"Easy, boy, easy," his father was imploring him, "what is the story you have?"

"This is no place for it," he answered; "this is no place for it; come hither."

And the half-dressed, awkward old man, with the white hair tumbling down about his eyes, and his grey flannel shirt open at the throat, had to follow him into the common room where alone in the house there was space to stir and leap. The turf, spread all along the wide hearth, lit the place with a red glow.

"Sit down there, father." And impetuously, the simpleton put him sitting back against the side wall, leaving the whole floor of trampled earth free for himself. The old man was sharply peering at the boy's face, trying to find the expression in his eyes. He had to look up at him; his height was huge, huger than before, for that ungainly droop with which he used to carry his shoulders was falling away from him: besides his head was up in the mellow dusk that hovered under the thatch, and only fitfully would the glow of the fire catch and throw the whole shoulders, head, and face into relief. Up in that fitfully-lighted darkness the great head was swaying and tossing with a new pride, a new alertness.

Nicholas had thrown his coat from him, tightened his belt, braced himself up. He glanced behind him, and placed his heel against the partition that ran across the room. His great right hand bent back sharp at the wrist, bracketing an imaginary stone, he balanced himself stiffly, back and forth, until his whole body was stretched like a bow; then with a wild whoop of triumph, he lifted himself and threw the imaginary stone hurtling through the air. After a moment of blindness, of confusion of mind, so huge the swinging figure in the little space, so swift the rush, so wild the yell, the old man

knew that his son was smiling down on him from the darkness beneath the thatch, was swaying before him. He tried to smile in return, but there must have been something of uncertainty, of fear in it, for suddenly Nicholas threw himself along the settle, flung his legs carelessly over its straight arm, and with wild laughter shook the place—that place where for many years—ever since the last of the trusty sons had gone to America—the sound of song or fiddle or laughter had never been heard!

"Whisht, Nicholas, whisht; look at the hour it is; and how do you know what strangers would be abroad these terrible times."

The son did not hear him: he was laughing at more than his father, he was remembering the faces in the coom, how they had looked at him in his moment of triumph. His mother, a soft, poor creature, broke urgently from the inner room: she was fastening her bodice:—

"For God's sake, Nicholas, lie down in your bed; what is it is happening to ye at all?"

Nicholas leaped at her, laid playful hands on her, warm and huge and hard they were, lifted her, swung her across the floor and planted her near the hearth on the remaining sugawn chair that was always there. Then swiftly again, he sprang to his place at the partition; once more

he balanced himself, slowly, slowly, with a fierce grin of determination on his brows, and his lips blown out. It seemed an age before he would make the throw. At last he leaped in the air, this time with no yell of triumph however, with rather a broken groan, and the end of the spring was a stumble, as weak and straggling as the cry. He gathered himself together, with effort it seemed, only to fall again on the settle, panting and puffing in exaggerated exhaustion.

At first they did not know it for acting, and both rose in terror from their chairs: but again the wild laughter broke from him; his head was flung back, and they could see the strong teeth shining in his mouth, regular as a wall of cut stone.

"For God's sake, Nicholas, don't be frightening us," his mother began again, but by this some spirit had leaped in the breast of the poor old palsied man:

"Whisht, woman," he said; "if he can't have his sport here where is he to have it?" and turning disdainfully from her, "Who was it, who was it?" he cried, his head stretched out, and his eyes glowing.

"The Lintagh!" Nicholas cried back to him in a smother of laughter, "The Lintagh of Tooreenaglas!"

The eldest son of every Lingwood family in

that glen was known as a "lintagh"—a word whose meaning is not clear—and Maurice Motherway knew the Lintagh of Tooreenaglas for a giant of a man, fierce and rough and proud: he looked at his son, now sitting there, a strange alertness upon him, with wonder and admiration; then he rose and caught his hand and shook it and prayed the blessing of Christ on his strength and courage.

V

Earlier than now was usual with him, Nicholas returned from his drilling: there was but little life in him.

"You're early to-night, a mhic?" his father said, peering at him, as was now his habit, to discover his temper. "Is it how—how Sean did not come to ye?"

"It is not."

He threw himself on the chair nearest to the door, and bent upon the old gun he had been drilling with. He was frowning upon it, twisting and turning it in his rough hands. The lamp threw its light down on the bent neck: it looked like a bit of a young pine from which the bark had been newly stripped away.

"Put it from you now, Nicholas, put it away

till the next time; you could never tell who'd step in to us."

"'Tis a crazy old thing it is." He spoke sullenly, his fingers tugging viciously at the iron work upon it.

"'Twill do what we want of it."

"'Tis a crazy old thing, it is!" The words were louder and louder.

"Ah, well; ah, well!"—the old man was hobbling back to the place he had risen from, when he heard a roar:

"'Tis a foolish, crazy old thing it is—there to it!"

It went flying across the room, full tilt against the whitened wall, it fell heavily on its muzzle and lay still. And his father saw Nicholas rise up, and go out the door and stand there for a long time, his two hands stuck fiercely in his belt, huge and black and angry, against the starry sky, uncertain where to turn or what to do.

VI

In spite of Ireland's protest, in spite of a hundred advices, in spite of the difference the coming in of the Americans was making in the war, England, it seemed, was intent on putting the Conscription Act in force on the Irish people.

But that did not explain the eager whispering of the group of Comeragh men in the lonely darkening coom. They were guessing, arguing, questioning about a thing that had happened among them that day: in a place four miles off from the little hamlet, a policeman, all but lifeless from loss of blood, had been found lying on the road, his head battered in as by a stone or cudgel. The men in the coom had no thought of how it had happened or of who it was that had done it. The story that had already spread over the mountains was that four masked men had leaped upon the policeman, downed him, and taken away his arms; and this story they hardly knew whether to believe or discredit. But for the most part it was of what would follow that they were speaking; they knew that there would be a thorough searching of the district, lines of soldiers would be scouring the mountains, with aeroplanes circling overhead; and O'Leary was warning them that the tiniest revolver found in their possession would mean a sentence of two years in prison, while any sort of rifle. . . . As he spoke a voice jerked out: "Here's Nick Motherway down to us." They turned and looked up the path; they saw him leaping down, making short cuts from angle to angle, springing from crag to crag, a gun held firmly above his head. As he came running to-

wards them, they all at once looked at one another and widened a little away from him. O'Leary himself had gone pale: he was high-strung, he needed warning before he could be sure of himself. He tried to speak lightly:—

"That's a fine gun you have, Nick."

"'Tis my father's gun."

"'Tis not your father's gun."

"Oh, but it is."

"'Twas your father's gun you had last night. . . ."

"'Twasn't; but an old crazy thing wouldn't shoot off for me."

"Let me see that one you have; let me handle it."

"No; my father told me not to let it out of my hands."

VII

While shooting in the coom, one after another of them, a scout of theirs brought word that motor lorries had already begun to bring squads of soldiers to the lonely barrack where the wounded policeman was shouting in his delirium. Yes; to-morrow aeroplanes would be circling over the mountains and lines of soldiers would be scouring across them, over and hither. Not

a cowshed, not a dairy-room but would be searched, not a turf stack but would be tumbled to the ground.

The young men stopped their shooting and gathered into one little knot in that darkening valley, and they spoke in whispers. They had not, up to this, ever come into handigrips with English soldiers, neither had any of them ever been in prison. But they knew how the Galtee mountains had been parcelled out and searched and researched after the dreadful affair at Knocklong; and they all agreed that it would be a foolish thing to sleep in their homes that night.

That night there was the sound of wailing in lonely glens: the war seemed to have come to their doors.

"Mother, maybe 'twould be as well for me not to be here if the soldiers come surrounding us during the night."

"Are you certain of that, a Thomais? Wouldn't it be better for you to stay and answer their riddling? What are you afraid of? Aren't we able and ready to prove to the world that you didn't stir from the bog the whole day long?"

" 'Tis better for us all to be on the one word, mother; them fellows are too clever for the like of us; we'd think we were mastering them, and

maybe 'tis hanging ourselves we'd be, or hanging one another!"

The mother would give way: it was better they should be all on the one word; but even as she gave her consent her eyes would be greedily feeding themselves on the boy's face, and her mind would be already yielding to the fears that would rush overwhelmingly upon her as soon as she had bolted the door for the night on *him!*

There was no such parting in Nicholas's house, no such wailing when the door was fastened and the lamp quenched. For there was Nicholas himself, and in high glee, too, after his bout of successful shooting in the glen. It was a lonely, far-away house, and no word whatever had reached the father or mother of the attack on the policeman.

But late in the night when all were in bed, and the house was as dark and as silent as the mountain top above it, a muffled, earnest hammering sounded on the bolted door. Soon there was whispering from bed to bed:—

"Nicholas, Nicholas, is it for you that knocking is?"

"No, 'tis not for me it is. What would they be wanting with me?"

"Will you rise up and ask them what it is they want?"

"I will not rise up to them."

"They'll never stop. 'Tisn't the police, the police would be calling out to us to open."

" 'Tis you they'll be asking for, whoever 'tis."

The hammering continued, not louder, however, than before. The old woman spoke to her husband: her voice sounded softer than by day:

" 'Tis better for yourself to speak to them. Nicholas, don't be listening to them at all, nor speaking with them at all."

Then suddenly, as if grown careless or desperate, the hammering redoubled in force, in speed, and a voice was calling to them to open at once.

" 'Tis the Gaelic he has." The old man raised his voice:

"In the Name of God who are you, and what do you want of us?"

"Open, or 'tis destroyed you'll be."

"My God! 'tis destroyed we'll be, he says. I'll open. . . . I'll open to ye."

He limped out and pulled the bolts without a word. O'Leary rushed in.

"Where's that gun?"

"What are you saying?"

"Where's Nicholas; where's that gun he had?"

"The gun—'tis in smithereens it is. If 'tis the bits of it. . . . Look, here . . . here."

O'Leary looked at the battered old thing. That was not the gun he had come for.

"My God! answer my question, and let me be off out of this. Blame yourself if ye have the police and the soldiers dragging the two of ye off before the night is out. Ye won't answer my question."

"There's Nicholas there for ye."

He opened the rickety old door in the partition and shoved in the candle. O'Leary brushed past it.

"Nicholas, where's that gun you had?"

A sleep-warmed face looked up at him: there was a harvest of laughter mantling it, everywhere.

"Where is it, tell me?"

"Can't ye look for it? If ye find it, carry it off with ye. Slan beo leat, a ghunna liom!"

"I tell you you'll be taken to Cork, to the jail, if 'tis found in the house:"

"Find it!" And then his laughter rang out suddenly and boisterously, careless of the night. The old man came hastening to him.

"Nicholas, let ye be quiet, be quiet, 'tisn't right for ye to be laughing this hour of the night."

"I'm done with ye," O'Leary blurted out, and left them there. He plunged down the bohereen: a little knot of silent men awaited him.

"Have ye it?"

"'Tisn't in it. I'm sure of it. Here's his father's old thing. 'Tis little information they'll get from Nicky, I warrant ye."

They went their way, warning the scattered people to get rid of whatever old guns they had before the police came in the morning.

VIII

"I'm waiting for ye. I'm waiting for ye."

It was true, the old man had been awaiting them. Now he rose up defiantly, but his teeth could be heard chattering in his head with excitement, not with fright.

The two policemen stepped in, bending their huge bodies under the lintel, darkening the place. Soldiers, fully armed, helmeted, followed them; two others remained outside the door, their rifles grounded.

The policemen without a word began to search the house, while the soldiers, from Staffordshire they were, gaped at their white, strained faces. But soon they turned their boyish eyes on the passionate, shrunken-up, trembling old man who was following the policemen from point to point, right at their coat tails, mocking them. Sometimes he would scramble in front of them: "Here

ye are Sergeant; 'tis my own feathers, the best of them is in it. Stick your bayonets into it and see for yourself. Wouldn't ye take it with ye? 'Twould be useful to ye down in that nest of yours.... And what is it you're after finding? Whatever it is, take it off with you: you're welcome to it. Nothing! And didn't I know ye'd be here this blessed morning, and didn't I hide the guns and the swords and the cannons up in the rocks, up in the rocks of the mountains. Sure 'twas for hiding-places God made them. . . ."

Nicholas was all the time standing foolishly in the middle of the floor; he was bigger than either of the policemen, the soldiers were only manikins beside him. He had not spoken a word; one could make no guess at his thoughts: perhaps his mind was just a wide vacancy disturbed on its far edges. He made no wonder of his father's flow of bitter words.

"My boys in America, the four of them, 'tis sore set they'd be to see ye wrecking the place like this: 'tis out on ye they would, and the King of England himself wouldn't stay nor hinder them."

"Let ye stop that gab." One of the policemen could no longer keep his temper.

"I will not stop it: the house is mine."

The wife came to him.

"In the Name of God, Maurice, let ye hold quiet."

"What for would I stop? Is it lies or the plain truth I'm telling?"

He roared out the words at them. His passion seemed to have shaken his disease from his limbs, from his tongue.

"Let ye keep silent, whatever 'tis ye're telling."

"Lay hands on me, why don't ye! Lay hands on me! Or on him. Finish God's work, let ye. *He* laid hands on us—blessed be His Holy Name. But He didn't finish the work. Let ye finish it, and the King of England won't see your children begging their bread. . . ."

"Hold quiet, I'm telling ye. 'Tis well ye know why I haven't ye bundled into the waggon by this, handcuffed and trussed. Hold quiet, or I'll——"

The sergeant had almost gripped the old man by the shoulder, and the old man had made no retreat from him. But, mouthing unintelligibly, Nicholas slid in between them. No one could catch his words, whether he threatened or excused. The mother threw herself upon him, speaking wildly; her husband she trusted not to go beyond the harm of words, but not her son. "Not you at all, Nicholas," she was saying, "not you at all." The searching had ceased; soldiers and all, they were staring at the great boy-man, in

whom life had come suddenly to the blossoming. He threw his mother from him, and with a sudden cry of joyous recollection swept towards the door.

"Stop him," the sergeant cried; "don't let him out." Instinctively he had given the command: he had no reason for it. The soldiers made a fence with their bayonets. Nicholas baulked at the steel, stretched a hand between the blades and made a grab at one of the soldiers. But another jabbed him viciously in the forearm with a bayonet, and he leaped back from them, his eyes fierce with anger, his brows scowling: he was at bay, the blood running down his hand. In the silence the old man suddenly fell down, heavily, without a word or groan.

IX

A wild south-wester was blowing over the Comeraghs that night—the rain would follow. In the thick darkness O'Leary climbed the stony pathway towards the Motherways' house. He listened. There was not a sound from within. Yet on account of the gale he had to pound the door. He heard the old woman's heavy boots as she came to open it.

"How is he?"

"He's sleeping, thanks be to God. They say

he won't be anything the worse for it, but sure 'tis well I know he's a good deal nearer to the grave, Sean."

"'Tis well he didn't go off on you; be thankful for that much."

"Sure, I am. But, Sean, whisper to me—Nicholas is inside,"—she nodded at the little bed-room—"and he has a great gun with him, wherever he got it, and I'm frightened to have it with him."

Sean was looking at her. She came to him and caught him earnestly by the shoulders.

"If you could get it from him, Sean?" and her eyes were cold with terror.

He shook his head. "Don't be afraid," he whispered.

He tapped at the dark-painted door of the side room. He got no reply. He lifted the latch and stepped in: the old man lay stretched before him on the bed like a corpse, grey-faced; he looked twenty years older than when Sean had last seen him. From the sleeping face Sean tried to keep his eyes from straying, but at the same time he knew that Nicholas was sitting by the bed, erect, watchful, like a hunter, and that a heavy-looking gun was laid across his knees, gripped in rigid hands. He did not speak a word, he gave no sign of recognizing his visitor.

Sean withdrew just as quietly as he had stepped

in. He found the old woman standing quite still in the self-same position as when he had left her.

"'Twould be no use to ask him for it," he whispered her. "Don't be afraid: there's no fear they'll come here again for some time."

One does not linger on a mountain side when a southwest wind is sweeping a sea of rain against it, but the thing that set Sean O'Leary plunging through the darkness, leaping headlong from rock to rock was not the discomfort of the rain and wind, but the vision that had seized on his brain—the meagre, death-like figure laid flat upon the bed, the wild creature watching by it, the gun across the huge knees, the fierce grip. And in the light of that vision the task of freeing his native land that he and others like him had taken upon their shoulders seemed suddenly to have become immensely heavier, infinitely more involved, more surely fraught through and through with living pain: one of those moments, when we see into the life of things had come to him. Next day he drilled his men as usual—as usual, if not more quietly, yet more firmly, with more grip. He had become surer of himself; perhaps the progress he was making was not unlike Nicholas Motherway's, only on a higher plane.

THE PRICE

THE PRICE

I

ALTHOUGH it had often happened since the spring softened the weather, that his youngest son, Ciaran, did not come home until the day was breaking, old Laurence Mac Carthy could no longer keep the bed that night. He had to rise. The cocks were crowing, and the gables of the ruined abbey of St. Ciaran, up to which all the lines and ways of the little town of Balliniskey led, were becoming a rich black against the lightening sky. Very quietly he slipped from his bed; his other son, Tom, the son on whom all the responsibility of the farm and shop depended, slept in the next room, and to awaken him might only once more renew the bitterness that had arisen in the little family since Ciaran, the younger son, had taken to drilling on the hills in the dark nights, if not, indeed, to something far more dangerous than drilling. Very quietly he slipped from the room, looking much older and more shrunken than was usual with him. He held his heavy boots clutched in under his right arm, and his left hand felt along the handrail of the stairs in the darkness. His lower lip was drawn in about the few

teeth that remained to him, drawn in in anxiety and alertness. He went through the untidy shop, feeling from one bag of meal to another, and out into the store at the gable end. Very carefully he drew back the bolts on the wicket, and then he could see right along the whole street of the town. The cold of morning was in the air, and the mists of autumn lingered like clouds in the wide space where the main street opened into the square. He saw a dog, he knew it to be Pat Keily's dog, nosing along the street, from door to door, very silently; nothing else was abroad; the cocks, however, were still crowing lustily in the yards behind the houses; one could picture them, stretching to the skies, triumphantly sending their voices to far distances.

"My God, protect him! my God, be with him," he was praying continually, and his head was quivering, and his lips were moving vigorously. He did not want to be seen there; above all, he did not want Tom to rise up and find him there; and yet he could not shut the wicket he had opened, could not again face up the stairs.

Two young men stood suddenly before him. They had come through Moloney's stabling yard, leaping over the wall into the little bohereen that led up to the hillside. He knew them. One was the Casey boy; the other was the schoolmaster's son, Sam Lillis. They stopped up suddenly to

find him in the wicket before them. "Oh!" they jerked out, and young Casey turned irresolutely on his heel, looking to see if anyone else were following. But Sam Lillis gave a sort of military salute:

"Ciaran,—Ciaran's after meeting with an accident."

The old man couldn't take it in. He turned his head halfway from the erect young man, spat on the ground and bent his brows fiercely. He did the same always when a price was put on his stock at a fair; he did it to gain time. Then his head swung up quickly:

"'Sh! lave ye, himself's asleep."

They were looking at him. They had come through the yard in a hurry, in a hurry had leaped over the wall, their eyes were very bright, their cheeks flushed. This blank pause they could not understand.

"Ciaran's wounded . . . in the shoulder. Maybe 'tisn't too much after all. . . ."

"Wounded? Ye're sure of that? God's will be done."

"We are. We are. Look, they're coming now."

Lillis raised a hand to the little group that were making down the bohereen, a hint of marching even then in the noise of their coming. "'Sh!" he said; "'sh!"

The old man caught the boy Casey's shoulder.

"Would you go up, like a good boy, and tell Tom to come down to us?"

"I will, sir."

The little crowd were at hand. The old man stepped outside the wicket—the opening was a narrow one—and stood helplessly by, bent down like the bough of an ancient tree.

"Michael," he said to Michael Keohane, who, he knew, was captain over them; "ah, Michael, he's only a boy, a slip of a boy."

But Keohane, who for the past few years had had always more problems to decide upon than he was able to come at, had acquired a quick and somewhat hard way of answering such questions as took one no further.

"A boy," he rapped out; "he's a damned sight better than the men of this place; we could hear them snoring through their windows—snoring at us! My God, they made me mad. If you go first, Tim, that way."

They had him scarcely in the store when another of the little band thrust in his head. He was pale, thin, and his teeth showed in the gums.

"Mick, Mick," he whispered quickly; "come out; listen; is it a motor? Anyway, 'tis broad daylight."

Keohane listened quietly, for rather a long

time, it seemed. " 'Tis better clear anyhow," he said. "We can't do any more."

Tom had come into the store, his face was red, his black hair was tossed about his forehead. He had had a full night's sleep. Keohane shot a glance at him.

"There he's for you; 'twill be some time before he'll finish that rick for you!" He turned on his heel and went out.

"Don't mind him, Tom; he's excited," the father said.

But Tom was examining the unconscious face of his brother; his voice surprised his father.

" 'Tis true for him," he said. "Yesterday he was nearly killed with the piking. I felt sorry for him myself. Take him by the feet. Nell will be down now."

The old father could go only very slowly, and Tom spoke again:

" 'Tis no use in complaining; it comes to all of them in their turn."

Nell, his only sister, came in. She was crying very softly, as a child might in a dream; she too feared her brother's judgment.

"Don't be hard on him, Tom. Sure you won't?"

"Who's hard on him?"

"Nobody, I know, I know."

"Jack Casey said it went right through; if it did, he mightn't be too bad." They had never heard so kind a voice coming from Tom's lips, Tom, who managed everyone of themselves, as well as every detail of the house, farm and shop.

"But 'twas a pity they failed," he continued, and they asked no questions; but, little by little, they got from him what he had been told by Jack Casey—that they had tried to hold up a military motor lorry in which a prisoner, Bat Kennedy's son, was being taken to Cork. That they had failed, that one of the police had been wounded, and that Ciaran had showed the stuff that was in him.

"My God," he said, "but they think highly of him, the boys do. When he's recovered we'll send him out to Aunt Mary's place and give him a long holiday, so we will."

II.

It seemed the boy would never regain consciousness. Dr Keating had come in his trap and dressed the wound: unless it grew septic, he hoped for complete recovery, only 'twould take time; besides they could not tell what the nervous system had suffered from the shock. Very silently the day went by; and though they did their best

to keep the story from spreading, many a whispered inquiry had to be answered, equally in a whisper, over the counters and over the sacks of meal that day. Even before the shops had opened, lorries of military and police had been rushing through the place, making for the scene of the fight at Templebreeda, almost ten miles off. Three aeroplanes had already swooped over the roofs of the houses. But up to the present no inquiries had been made, and it seemed the authorities were on the wrong track.

In the afternoon Nan Twohig slipped quietly into the shop; she had brought some flowers from her hillside garden; she had also brought a little phial of Lourdes water.

She was tall and very erect, yet lissom and graceful in her movements. Her eyes were soft and grey, always wide open,and very frank looking. Her lips were palish, never moist, and very sweet and gentle in their unbroken repose. She brought a moment of stillness into every group she joined, just one moment, in which their looks, their words, their thoughts underwent a subtle chastening. Yet no one had ever known her to make judgment on any one or to reprove or scorn. She had no fear in her, no yearnings, it would seem; no curiosity. She knew where she was going, as an infant knows its mother's breast. And in some dim way, the whole town knew it too; in

their thoughts she was already a Sister of Charity.

In a little house on the hillside not far from the ruined abbey, she lived with her parents, both now very old; they had married late in life, and she was their only child. Her father had sold out the hotel—it was practically the only hotel in the place; and now the three of them lived in great retirement in their sheltered nook. Their comfort was, morning and evening, to frequent the church, in which, at Sunday Mass and at the Sunday Benediction, Nan played the organ and conducted the choir.

A phial of Lourdes water was, indeed, a treasure.

"I will not, Nan," old Laurence Mac Carthy said to her, the two of them standing above the unconscious figure so limp-looking in the bed. "I will not; it is more fitting that you do it yourself, whatever you think right."

She looked a little perplexed. She was staring fixedly at the young lad's face. It was a good-looking face, well-shaped, oval in its outline, refined, the features sharply cut. In the stillness, lifelessness of unconsciousness, the outline of the features was everything, as in the face of a corpse; and one would think that Nan Twohig had never seen the young man before, so intently were her eyes set upon him.

"Very well," she said, and she took the phial of blessed water and made the Sign of the Cross upon the features, touching his brow, his lips, with the water. And then the father lifted very gently the bed-clothes from the shoulder and Nan again made the Sign of the Cross on the dressings. That done, she dropped on her knees, and bent her head in prayer. Her face and that of the young man were very close together: he was lying on his right side along the edge of the bed. The father stood above her. She felt his hand touch her on the shoulder; she opened her eyes, and she saw that Ciaran, too, had opened his eyes, was looking at her gravely; suddenly she saw him smile to recognise her, but it did not last more than a few moments. Sudden fear, pain, made his features wince; his gaze sharpened a moment, became dark and full of distress; and he lapsed again into unconsciousness—before a word had been spoken to him. She rose up trembling, trying to master herself. Colour had come up into her pale cheeks, and her fingers stretched to support herself on the low table that stood near the bed.

The old man took no notice of her; it was on his son's face that his eyes were set.

"Nan," he whispered, "did you see that? Wouldn't you say that would be a good sign?"

"Oh, yes," she could hardly speak; her voice

sounded hard and rough to her. "Oh, yes, he'll come out of it, little by little. . . . I'll leave you this."

She went away, hushed and wondering.

III

That sudden change that had come so swiftly over the smiling eyes, she carried with her: it renewed itself in her vision again and again. She went swiftly and silently through the agitated people. That there was a region of pain, of fear, that she had never realised, hovered among her thoughts; of all her thoughts that chiefly she would put away from her by her swift hurrying; for it questioned her, questioned her prudence and her own courage. It now seemed to her so callous to have given utterance to heroic thoughts without making any effort to realise the suffering that such thoughts may bring in their train!

Her attitude all along in the ever-multiplying troubles that were being poured out on her people, on her country, had surprised even those who best knew her. They had known her for a nun-like spirit, moving in her own ways, in ways that were not the world's. There were thousands like

her in Ireland, gentle souls whose real country was the cloister, whom only the duties of life kept still in the world. That such a soul should take unflinching stand by the side of the young men, was scarcely to be understood. The old priest had time and again spoken of them as hotheads, had threatened the country with famine if they persevered in their wild courses, had warned the farmers and the shopkeepers to look after their sons, if they did not want to see their bank balances come tumbling down. It was little use for him: the young men went on with their drilling, with their raiding for arms, with their attacks on police barracks, on the mails, on patrols of military and police: and in all that they did Nan Twohig justified them. This, however, she did privately; in simple words she would give her opinion—not knowing that her words would run from lip to lip, would temper the opinions of the worldly-wise and strengthen further the resolve of the young men never to give in. In aloofness, in repose, her life flowed on unchanged. Once only did she do a thing that surprised herself and astonished the town. It was the first Sunday in August, and the little church was crowded to the door. In the middle of the Mass, the old priest, who had never made even one mistake in all the dragging years of his long life, had asked for the

customary prayers for the dead, had begun to read out the list of names:—

"James O'Donovan, of Lyrenagreine.
"Thomas O'Rourke, of Lismoran.
"John Dempsey, of Tobberinglas——"

and there suddenly he paused, puzzling out, it was evident, the next name on the list. After a moment he began to read on again, there were but three other names, and had finished them, had raised his head and was looking straight down the church through his spectacles, when Nan Twohig's voice spoke out quite clearly from the little organ gallery:—

"And for the soul of Roger Casement, whose anniversary occurs about this time."

Very few looked around from the altar, scarcely one; besides, their eyes were all on the priest, who stood still on the altar steps facing down the church. They could see his struggle to steady his voice to finish the prayers for the dead: "May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen." Then he turned again to the altar, and resumed the whisper of the Mass in a silence that seemed to be afraid of itself.

Yes, that action on her part did surprise herself, yet not so much as one would think; she was quite sure that she had done nothing wrong.

Because it was Nan Twohig that had done that extraordinary thing, the people discussed it only in whispers and never discussed it with the Canon himself; neither did he invite discussion on it. Silence was the better thing, whether she had done right or wrong. But one old man did say: "People that walk that way, with their heads up, and their eyes looking straight before them, you can never tell what it is they'll stop at." But one thing embarrassed the gentle soul: she noticed for the first time that the Volunteers, young men, many of them, whose names she had never heard, would salute her and glance shyly at her with grateful eyes as she passed on. But it was now more than a month since that Sunday in August.

All the day motor lorries of military and police were tearing through the long street of the town, sending up clouds of dust. The soldiers were but boys for the most part; they had taken off their helmets and their hair was tossed about their foreheads. They carried their rifles with the barrels resting on the edge of the lorry. And baggage, clothing, hair, faces, guns, as well as the motor itself, were white with the dust of the country roads. They laughed out boisterously or sang as they passed through the silent towns. In the afternoon an armoured car rattled swiftly through the street and disappeared in a cloud of

dust. The people, who had never before seen one, began to put up their shutters, and to gather in anxious groups. Everybody had come to know of the fight at Templebreeda, of young Ciaran Mac Carthy's bravery, and of the wounded policeman. Reprisals had followed such happenings in other places, and that was what they feared. News arrived that Templebreeda had been surrounded by a cordon of troops, that the houses were being searched and that many arrests had been made. In one case the three sons had been swept off, in another the father and the only boy. Some small arms, some scraps of ammunition, some Sinn Fein literature, some books or papers in the Irish language had been found in their houses, and explanations were neither asked nor offered.

Nan had just heard the news of the arrests when the motor lorries swept again at a terrific rate through the street: they were returning. The second and third carried the prisoners that had been made. Young men, some indeed only boys in their teens, they stood upright, handcuffed one to another, in a ring of steel. They were dressed in their working clothes. They waved their caps, hurrahed and sang whenever they passed through a little hamlet or village; and the ring of soldiers about them stood erect and very silent. But the older men among the

prisoners were depressed and awkward-looking: they had not yet had time to fling themselves on the reckless heroic plane where the young men had been dwelling for months and years.

Nan's heart had been opened that morning, and she saw it all with a sense of warm, piteous tears. She saw how cowed the townspeople were; as the prisoners passed only an odd one of the people would raise a hand or cap. They had not the heart. At that time the jails were crammed with prisoners, and some of them were on the point of death from hunger-striking, while day by day others of them were drifting home to their people, wrecked in body and sometimes in mind.

No sooner had they all swept by, leaving the street full of whirling clouds of dust, than the children of the place formed into ranks and marched around the streets shouting out their Republican songs at the top of their voices. Nan felt thankful for the heartiness of their singing: she was repeating the words of their songs for her own comforting:—

> "No more our ancient sireland
> Shall shelter the despot or the slave."

All this that she had seen, the rushing motors, the young prisoners, the anxious people, whispering, and fearful of what the night or the next

day would bring upon themselves, Nan carried to bed with her that night. She could not sleep for it; and scraps of the boys' songs would ring through her brain; and then the young flesh of Ciaran Mac Carthy, quivering with agony, his eyes darkening with it,—she would see his head laid sideways and quite helpless on the white pillow. And she was not satisfied with her own part in all this, though she did not even ask herself if she could have done otherwise.

IV

And so she was sitting up in her bed, listening, one would think, from the expression of her face. She could see the tree-tops dark against the clear sky, and occasionally a bird fluttered quite close to her window, as if it were pulling at the leaves. She grew cold, and with a smothered sigh lay down, drawing the clothes warmly about her. Presently she raised her head: she thought she heard someone climbing over the wall of her garden, thought she heard a leap down on the grass. She kept quite still, terrified. Dreadful things had been done, done on both sides, during the past twelve months, and even to the hearts of the Volunteers themselves, daring and courageous as they were, a peremptory knocking at the door

in the dead of night would send coldness and fear. For such a knocking she felt herself waiting, though she had no idea what would happen to herself, having heard it! She heard a stirring and then a low whistle. She started violently. "Christ help me, Christ protect me," she was praying. The whistle was repeated. If it were a signal to others! She was half-way out the bed, she would go into her mother's room, when she heard whistled very soft and low, the first notes of "Wrap the Green Flag Round Me, Boys"—a song that had become burdened with the most tragic associations. Her heart opened; she felt reassured; and her thoughts thanked him, whoever it was, for having struck on such a signal at the very moment when terror was chilling her through and through. She liked the song: like everyone else she had often found it singing in her brain, as if it would never end; like an old friend it came to her now.

She crept to the window and opened it. A voice whispered up:—

"Is that Miss Twohig?"

"Yes; what is it you want?"

"No one can hear us?"

"No; you're Michael Keohane?"

"Yes, I am. Tell me, would it be possible for us to bring Ciaran Mac Carthy up here. Could you keep him for some time?"

"Up here! Now?" She could not help her surprise.

"Yes. We think it best. His house will surely be searched to-morrow; he's well known to them. He'd be safe here. And the doctor wouldn't allow us to take him any distance—without a proper ambulance."

"But *now*, you said?"

"'Twould be best. We must keep it secret from the people in the town. Please let us."

"Oh! don't think I'm against it. We'd do more than that for Ciaran, for any of you."

"I know that; we call you our best recruiting sergeant!"

She heard him laugh; but all the anxiety of the long day swept back on her at his words. He spoke again:—

"Your people won't be against it?"

"They're all right; I'll answer for them."

"Could you have a place ready in an hour's time?"

"Yes, certainly, in less."

When he had gone, she dressed in haste and went to her mother's room. Then she was running up stairs and down stairs and from room to room, her arms full of bundles of white linen. She was full of quiet excitement, and indeed full of a secret joy, a secret fire she could not quench.

Her house was honoured; she herself was honoured; it did not matter what happened next. They might come and break in the panels of the door—which had become their usual way of entering houses—or leap in through the windows on top of them; and no resistance could be made; but it did not matter; she would have suffered with the rest, and so could take her place without misgivings in the Ireland that was being born. And though she would have taken in any wounded Volunteer whatever, she was glad it was Ciaran Mac Carthy that she was asked to take in. For a moment she had forgotten all the anxious thoughts that were with her the length of that long day; now she could chirp like a bird.

In less than an hour he was lying there beneath her eyes. He regained consciousness; and began to speak to her with great shyness. He was overjoyed at the way Tom had taken this upset. He always knew he was good at heart, but he had great responsibilities, and responsibilities harden a man; look at Michael Keohane. And then she chatted to him of what Michael had said of himself, of his courage—and he laughed gently, and was glad to have his captain think so well of him. But she would not let him talk. He must keep quiet. And quietly he shut his eyes and dozed off to sleep. Soon afterwards his sister, Nell, came into the room and found

her there, sitting quietly, staring straight in front of her, full of wonder. A warmth was in her heart. She was remembering the richness of Ciaran's hazel eyes, the frank, boyish gladness in them when he smiled.

V

When our heart opens at all, it opens to the cold winds as well as to the kindly sun. As soon as Nan entered her own room, leaving Nell to keep watch by Ciaran's side until the morning, which was the arrangement they had made, new fears swept down upon her. She tried to put them away; everything had not gone on too well, and even if it had, well, it was God's will. And his wound had not taken cold in the journey through the hillside fields beneath the cold stars. And he would not be arrested . . . It was true the night was chilly, she had felt it herself, sitting up in bed; and certainly it was colder now, as was only natural. If he were arrested he would go on hunger-strike rather than be classed among the criminals and treated as one. And if he did! She went from change to change. And behind all her questionings was this thought: that whatever had happened, whatever was happening (his wound might be turning poisonous at that very

moment) whatever would happen—she was bearing no part in it. She was herself—lived in another world—callous and impotent.

Suddenly she began to reclothe herself, snatching up her garments quickly and buttoning them with quick, deft fingers. The pious little ejaculations that she had been whispering to herself, almost mechanically, she whispered no longer. But her own erectness had returned to her. She had resumed herself.

In Balliniskey there is a standing devotion to their patron saint, to St. Ciaran. They make rounds at the ruined abbey on the hillside, just above the town; and many a boy in the streets of the little place answers to the old saint's name. Nan shared in this devotion; and in those years of national trouble had often found great consolation in praying at the holy well in the old abbey grounds. Suddenly, while undressing, the thought of the broken abbey set there above their houses, looking down on them, the thought of the old Gaelic saint, had come to her with already an assurance of comfort; St. Ciaran, it seemed, in some mysterious way could marry her, could knit her into the troubles that had come yet once again on his own ancient land, that had come on his own boy, Ciaran Mac Carthy, for loving the same old land.

Quickly she dressed, wrapped a long, whitish

warm cloak she had about her, stepped swiftly yet silently down the stairs, opened the door, and made hastily along the little hillside path that led to the holy well; there were but two fields to go through.

Parallel to and above the main street, she was walking along the hillside, swiftly and without fear; her eyes were set straight before her: a queen walking apart from, yet in the gaze of her people, would walk with the self-same air.

Below her, without turning her head, she was conscious of the jumbled roofage of the sleeping town; there was the irregular line of the street, and beyond, the massing of the houses at the hilly end of the square. In a window, as she went along, she caught the tiny gleam of a little red lamp; she had seen that little gleam before; she knew it burned all night long before a statue of the Sacred Heart: to see it was a good omen.

She heard stirrings in the bushes—they had nothing to do with her; and she felt the sting of the constant wind, but with that neither had she anything to do. She drew the cloak about her and made on.

Still tighter she drew it about her whilst she knelt at the well, for the wind seemed to have strengthened. Her two hands, almost hidden within it, gripped its edges and drew them closer and closer about her shoulders as she sank deeper

and deeper into the heart of her prayer. Her forearms were folded, rigid and hard, pressing against her breast. Her head was bent down earnestly, so much so that the bone of her chin seemed welded into the wrist bone of her left hand. She had become one mass, without limbs it seemed, and that mass was leant, almost fiercely, against the grey and twisted trunk of a little elder tree that the wind off the hillside had bent away from the well. And so she prayed, without a movement of the lips, perhaps without a word.

After some time a sound from far away disturbed her: it was like a stronger wind than this that was on her brow. She put it away from her, it was a distraction. But it was still strengthening, and a throbbing had come into it. The throbbing was now imparted to the whole place, to her own framework of flesh and bone. She wondered at it; and involuntarily glanced aside, swiftly, when a light flashed up in a back window. It did not last more than a second: it was suddenly quenched, leaving a great gap of darkness. Then she heard a window raised, she heard a voice say, "Listen, can't ye!" After a moment she heard a different voice, a frightened voice, cry out, "For God's sake, shut it!" The window was shut down. Farther off, other voices were speaking in low tones, as if from window to window. They, too, ceased after a moment.

And then the whole place was certainly throbbing to that ever-increasing, windy sound that was coming nearer and nearer. She would not stir: it would pass away, pass away into the distance.

That throbbing sound, furious with suppressed force, suddenly swelled into a roar, had come round a corner, swelled into a sudden song, loud, drunken, triumphant. She did not know the song. It was roaring rather than song, only there was laughter in it. Shots were fired. She leaped to the sound. She shook her head as if there were marbles in her ears. All the dogs in the place were howling or yapping. More shots were fired, again, again; and glass began to fall down on the flags. The throbbing was less now; and the song was broken into odd phrases and shouts; but the dogs were still howling or snapping viciously. Orders were shouted out—loudly, fiercely. She could not stir. She had no thought—no more than a person has while he is falling from a height to his death. Suddenly there was wild cheering and a great glare shot up, lit up everything in so bright a flash that she could see nothing for it. But the flash of it died down to one spot: there below her in the street she could see great tongues of flames coming out through the broken glass of Kelly's shop, coming fiercely out and licking the front of the

house. She lost control of her limbs to understand the meaning of it, to understand what was come to her little town. She might have stood up, or fallen down, or leaped up on the steps of the stone cross. She was all eyes, glaring into that corner of flame—the rest of the town had not shown a sign of life: not a window had been raised, not a lamp lit! Against the flames, almost in under them, she could see human figures running swiftly from place to place; they bent down as they ran, and orders pursued them. Now women's voices burst out, one of them wailing out the Holy Name without ceasing. But the little figures that were tending the flames only ran the more swiftly from place to place. She had seen pictures like it—devils trying to burn a saint of God: they were armed with long fork-like implements. Her eyes fell on one of the figures: his back was to the flames, he was staring straight up at her; he grabbed another by the shoulder: two of them, side by side, were staring up at her, and she could not move. A little crowd of them gathered then together; one of them cried out, and another struck him on the mouth; that she saw quite plainly. Then they ran, all in the one direction, the man who was struck running last.

.

"But she became a nun all the same."

"She always intended to become a nun."

"But she should have waited till her parents died."

"Well, she didn't."

"And they saw her from the street."

"More than they saw her. She had climbed the steps of the cross, and stood by its side, with her right hand stretched out, stiff; and the light played up on her; and petrol makes a strong light. They saw her hand move. They fled. On the steps she was found."

"She saved Balliniskey. Look at what they were after doing in Lismoran."

"She did; and perhaps that is why she did not wait till her parents died before becoming a nun."

" 'Twas a sort of miracle. But then there's Ciaran Mac Carthy."

"Yes, indeed."

"And there's Ireland, too."

"And this is the end of all, that all miracles are the fruit of love."

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 038 922 1